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# JUST THE FACTS

## A Handbook for United Methodist Youth Ministries

MICHEAL L. SELLECK  
NATALIE L. WOODS  
MIKE WRIGHT-CHAPMAN



P.O. Box 840 • Nashville, TN 37202 • Phone (615) 340-7068

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### **About Ordering Resources**

Throughout this book many excellent resources are suggested. Most of these can be ordered by calling Cokesbury at 1-800-672-1789 or through your local Cokesbury store. Resources that are published by Discipleship Resources can be ordered through Cokesbury or by calling 1-800-814-7833.



# Dedication

To the youth in whose lives we hope to demonstrate Christian love,  
To the unchurched youth we hope to embrace in God's community,  
To the youth who lead and the youth who follow,  
To the adults who act as mentors, youth sponsors, Sunday school teachers  
and help make youth ministry a reality,  
To the pastors, and lay professionals in ministry with youth,  
To the senior pastors with a vision for ministry with youth,  
We dedicate this book of ideas, suggestions and advice.  
We don't have all the answers. Many of the answers are within you.  
Youth ministry is being created by you in your own places of ministry.  
Thank you for hearing and responding to God's call.

# Foreword

This book is written for **YOU**, especially if you are a youth or an adult in ministry with youth. The book can be read from cover to cover. It is also designed to be used like a recipe book — some parts you will find helpful right away and some parts will be important to look at later. We hope it will be useful and helpful to you whether you are a “seasoned veteran” or brand new to youth ministry. It is intended to be useful for creating a brand new youth ministry or for re-creating an existing one.

Like a highway, there are signs throughout the handbook inviting you to stop and check things out. To make browsing easier, we use icons to indicate various types of material:



**Important questions to consider**



**Really important ideas**



**Resources**

Please note that although many of these ideas, resources, and questions are directed specifically to youth, adults who work with youth will find them helpful too.

*Just the Facts* will help you understand some basics of ministry with youth in the United Methodist Church. The first chapter contains information helpful for getting a youth ministry started, including a

discussion of the systems approach to youth ministry, a new way of going about it. The second is a discussion of the ways youth learn. The third has to do with leadership and building the youth ministry team. Starting with chapter four, there are many areas covered and thousands of practical suggestions.

We hope *Just the Facts* will be helpful to you, serving as a theoretical and a practical guide as you lead youth ministry in your setting. It's called *Just the Facts* because it presents basic information and, throughout the text, suggestions for many additional resources to help you be effective in your ministry.

We are indebted to Mike Selleck, Natalie Woods, and Mike Wright-Chapman, three seasoned youth ministers, for writing such a helpful and thoughtful book. We are also grateful for all of the youth and adults who helped give the input, test the ideas, and guide the production of this resource.

Youth ministry provides settings for youth to develop a solid relationship with Jesus Christ, grow in discipleship, form relationships, learn decision-making skills, and serve others. Youth ministry makes a difference in the lives of young people! We hope *Just the Facts* will help you create settings for youth ministry that will make a lasting and critical difference in the lives of the young people you serve.

# Chapter 1: Getting Started



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## Building a System for Youth Ministry

### *The Systems Approach*

- Why does your local church provide youth ministry?
- What is your mission?
- What is it that *drives* your youth ministry?
- How is it organized for planning, decision-making, and problem-solving?
- What is your vision for young people?

Whether in the process of inventing, renewing, or reinventing your church's youth ministry, these and related questions are the ones you need to think through.

All of us want to provide quality youth ministry. However, many of us do the same "stuff" over and over, year after year. Youth ministry often becomes repetitive for the sake of "tradition," or because it is easier. The danger of this practice lies in the reality that youth change and need change. Their needs are not met when programs are repetitive. Planning for quality youth ministry requires a commitment to flexibility, the ability to listen for needs, and a willingness to continually improve.

Defining a system is crucial to effective planning, solving problems, or improving the way things get

done. "Systems thinking" is a way of looking at how ideas, decisions, and activities have an impact upon one another.

So, what is a system?

(See Figure 1.)

A system is made up of processes, each of which is made of input, transformation, and output. Altogether, the system leads to a result, and each system has a central process sometimes called the **core process** or the **primary task**.

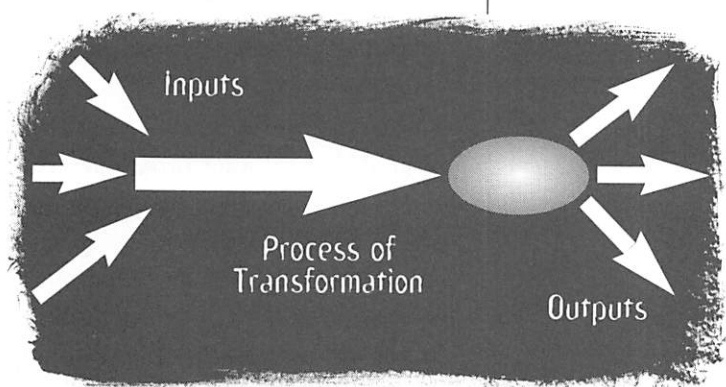


Fig. 1

A system that works well should be aligned with the central process. In a congregational system, processes are focused on transforming people into faithful disciples. The processes are what we commonly call ministry. People come into the church (input). The church loves them, encourages them to know God, nurtures their



**A listening process includes asking specific questions, recording answers, compiling data, and looking for patterns of thought, concern, or need. Ask questions like:**

- **What are some of your greatest fears/questions/concerns?**
- **How do you deal with those fears/questions/concerns?**
- **Could you use some help facing those fears/questions/concerns?**
- **What has our church offered for youth in the past year that you found helpful?**
- **What do you find most disappointing about our church's youth ministry?**
- **Considering your schedule and other commitments, how possible would it be for you to try new youth opportunities at our church?**

**Listening can be accomplished through surveys, small group brainstorming experiences, and check sheets.**

spiritual growth (transformation). The church then sends the people out to serve in God's community (output). According to *The Book of Discipline*, the mission of the United Methodist Church is "to make disciples of Jesus Christ." We make disciples as we proclaim the gospel, lead persons to commit their lives to God through Jesus Christ, nurture persons in Christian living, and send them into the world to live as servants of Christ. This is the primary task of every congregation.<sup>1</sup> The primary task flows through all the settings, activities, and events of the congregation.

What does systems thinking have to do with youth ministry? Youth ministry is a system of interrelated

processes that lead to a particular result. Youth ministry is the system by which youth flow through the congregation's core process. Once the core process is stated and understood, then what you plan and do can be clearly defined. You can begin to plan events, settings, or activities with a particular purpose in mind. Your youth ministry will be purpose-driven rather than program-driven. In other words, you plan for a purpose (receiving, transforming, and sending), rather than planning for the sake of the program ("It's easy," or "It's been done before; therefore we know it works").

How do you build a system for developing quality, purpose-driven youth ministry? Begin by building a **learning organization**, one that is committed to creating the results you want. Learning organizations:

1. **Listen to people's deepest yearnings.**
2. **Create a system that meets people's basic expectations.**
3. **Improve that system to go beyond people's basic expectations to delight them.**
4. **Enable all people to contribute to the effort.**

Listening is the most important and most basic task of the learning organization. Listening is more than hearing words. It is hearing "between the words," and understanding the meaning behind them. Listening is not a passive activity but an interactive process in which both speaker and listener share the responsibility for mutual understanding. Put another way, listening is a team effort that requires training and practice.

Concepts closely associated with systems thinking are mission, vision, and aim. The **mission** is what an organization does, the “nature” of the organization, the frame around the “big picture.” The **vision** is the picture within, the goal, a clear and definite image of the future. The **aim** is the mission and vision combined. (See Figure 2.)

## The Primary Task of Youth Ministry

As mentioned earlier, a system’s **primary task** is its most basic function. The primary task flows through the system, defining its work or ministry. It is what an organization “must do in a particular environment at a particular time to carry out its basic function and survive.”<sup>2</sup> Understanding the concept of the primary task is essential to understanding the difference between ministry that is purpose-driven, and ministry that is program-driven.

The primary task of United Methodist Youth Ministry is:

- To love youth where they are.
- To encourage youth in developing their relationship to God.
- To provide youth opportunities for nurture and growth.
- To challenge youth to respond to God’s call to serve in their communities.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Love youth where they are.***

Understand youth as they are, with their boundless energy, endless questions, and their experience of the world in which they live. Local churches and communities must be in ministry with youth instead of

designing a set of activities that do not meet the needs of individual persons.

### ***Encourage youth in developing their relationship to God.***

Local churches and communities invest time and energy to help youth develop particular skills that promote a realistic, loving, and meaningful



Fig. 2

relationship with God through Jesus Christ. These “skills” include Bible study, prayer, and strong relationships with significant adults.

### ***Provide youth opportunities for nurture and growth in Christian faith and daily life.***

Inviting youth to participate in the full life of the church through study, worship, and service can offer

grounding in the lifelong journey of faith.

### ***Challenge youth to respond to God's call to serve in their communities.***

Support youth who wish to "make a difference in the world." Service is not only making home repairs or raking leaves or mowing for persons who cannot do it for themselves; service is any act of kindness or compassion created from the desire to live out one's baptism.

### ***Building the System***

Is your church ready to engage in the primary task of youth ministry? Is your church striving to become a learning organization? Here's one way to begin the process. Design a listening event, through which youth and adults can be heard. The following questions may be helpful to ask:

- Why do youth from our church want to get together?
- What is the purpose of our youth ministry?
- What do we really want to accomplish in the lives of young people?
- What are our current decision-making processes related to youth ministry?
- Why does our church "do" youth ministry the way it does? (Is it for the sake of tradition? It is less of a hassle to repeat the same schedule of events year after year?)

One way to approach these questions is to talk in terms of *paradigms*. A paradigm is a way of look-

ing at reality. It is one way of seeing the world, one way of understanding how something is accomplished. A paradigm may be shaped by our structures, rules, limits, rituals, habits, and boundaries. Limited paradigms often keep organizations from changing or living up to their highest potential.

Questions asked in terms of paradigm thinking might be phrased this way:

- What shapes our current paradigm of youth ministry?
- What impact do routine, tradition, and custom have upon this paradigm?
- How does our paradigm affect the spiritual and emotional growth of youth?
- What seems practically impossible for us to achieve, yet if we did it, could dramatically change our ministry with youth?
- Are there rules, structures, habits, or traditions that threaten or block the success of our ministry?

Asking questions like these in very specific ways is one way of practicing the most crucial task of systems thinking — listening. The facilitator of your discussion will need to write down everything said. Then the team can review all the written information. Through careful, patient, and persistent listening to youth and adults of your church, the leaders can begin to define what quality youth ministry will be and to design the system needed to reach that goal.

Using this information, your leadership team can discover the mission and vision for your youth ministry. The mission is the frame, the way you move toward the vision. The vision is who you want to be. For example, the mission statement of the youth of First United Methodist Church, Arlington, Texas, is to “Provide sanctuary for all youth, to help youth respect themselves, to grow spiritually and emotionally, and to share our love with one another through our faith in Jesus Christ and God our Creator.”<sup>4</sup>

That mission is the screen through which their leadership team looks at all they attempt to plan and implement. Their vision is to be “The Hands and Feet of Christ.” The way they attempt this is to provide sacred space in which all youth feel safe and unconditionally loved and accepted. They provide a variety of opportunities through which youth might grow in self-respect, confidence, and relationship with Jesus Christ. Those opportunities include teaching-learning, community building, personal

growth, and service-learning options. To keep themselves aware and reminded of their reason for existing, they painted the words of their mission and vision on walls in their primary meeting space.

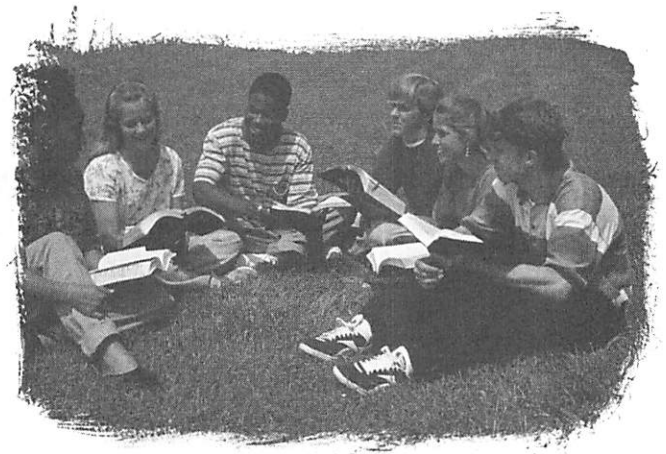
Leaders need to understand, state, and remind participants of the vision on a regular basis. It is the members of the leadership team who bear responsibility for holding everyone to and guiding everyone toward the vision. Both youth and adult leaders are committed to living out the mission and vision. They are enthusiastic about their roles. Visionary youth and adult leaders listen carefully and regularly. They are willing to think and plan flexibly. They are dedicated to constant and continual improvement. They are challenged by the prospect of change and growth. That is what a systems-based youth ministry requires. Building such a system can be energizing and fulfilling for youth who are involved in effective, quality, purpose-driven ministry.



**Notes:**



## Chapter 2: Ways Youth Learn



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### **Developmental Tasks of Middle and Senior High Youth**

Adolescence is a normal phase of life, even though within most families the transition from childhood to young adulthood is noted by challenges that may be difficult for everyone in the family. Each youth will follow his or her own inner time schedule in the transition between childhood and young adulthood. Some youth may start maturing as early as age 10. Others may still be struggling to complete a specific developmental task at age 20. To develop a system that works with youth, it is necessary first to understand youth's development. Early adolescence refers to middle or junior high school youth (ages 10 to 13). Middle adolescence refers to senior high school youth (ages 14 to 16 or 17). Older adolescence refers to late senior high and college-aged youth/young adults (ages 16 to the early 20s).

From infancy to old age, at specific times we learn a task that is instrumental for us to feel happy and successful at that stage. We learn to sit up, to crawl, to walk. Robert Havighurst identified eight tasks of adolescence based upon his idea that each individual "learns his or her way through life."<sup>5</sup> The completion of each task is a building block for

the next developmental task. Timing is a key element.

In order for adolescents to successfully complete these "developmental tasks," growth and maturing take place in the following areas: physical, sexual, social, intellectual, emotional, moral, spiritual, self-identity, and psychological. We should keep in mind that each area is independent of the others and a person matures in it in his or her own time. This means you may have a highly intelligent senior high youth who is socially and/or emotionally young or any other combinations of unequal growth and maturity. For a quick look at the stage and age time lines, refer to the chart on page 17.

### **1ST TASK**

#### ***Meaningful friendships with both male and female peers***

Relationships are very important to adolescents. An important part of their identity development is the way they relate to others. Adolescents break away from their parents and even lifelong friends during their search for self in early adolescence. These split-ups often cause great distress to the youths, their friends, and their parents. A support group of caring peers and adults can lend nurture and give guidance to youth as they struggle with establishing and keeping up meaningful relationships.



**How can your youth group activities be designed to focus on things youth have in common—using cooperation rather than competition?**

The skills involved in maintaining significant relationships (communication, the give and take of sharing, listening) aid the young person in accepting responsibility for his or her own behavior and for future life. Social changes during this stage of life include youth seeking their role in society and forming their own philosophy of life and politics. Youth are also examining varied lifestyles, cultivating special interests, exploring moral models, and verbalizing about their future and the world. It is important for adolescents to feel that the answers at which they arrive are their own feelings, beliefs, and conduct and not their parents' commands (or demands). The social psychologist Erik Erikson described this stage in life as the struggle for identity.<sup>6</sup>

It is ironic that in their search for independence, young teens find security and support as part of a crowd. In their efforts to be accepted, junior or middle highs in particular dress, talk, act, and believe the way "everybody else" does within their circle of friends. Rejection from peer groups usually happens because of something out of the youth's control: home, family, economics, looks, language, or being the new kid in school.

It is at this age that peer pressure takes on its negative overtones. Junior high students or middle schoolers will take extreme measures to be recognized and accepted by their peers, even chancing family dis-

pleasure or risky behaviors. This is the age group more than any other where caring adults should encourage adolescents to think for themselves, to think through behavior and subsequent consequences.

Youth ministry can help adolescents develop socially. Caring adults can help youths to feel special and accepted. Youth need to feel free to talk about their friendships. Adults as well as other youth (peer ministry) can be listeners when adolescents need to talk out troubling aspects of their friendships.

Youth ministry can model acceptance and openness. Adult leaders can show youth how to mix and mingle with group members. Most youth have to be deliberately mixed through icebreakers and small group tasks. Having something to do gives youth a focus as well as time together where they can start getting to know each other. Discussions on a particular topic and service projects focusing on affirmation can work well for familiarizing youth with each other as well as with other people and situations.

## 2ND TASK

***Affirming one's feelings and comfortableness with sexuality***

Early adolescents have an awakening of sexual feelings. Television, movies, music, and advertising bombard adolescents with messages about sexuality. The searching process for individual sexual identity, decisions, and values is more confusing than ever for teenagers.

Churches should include sex education from the Christian per-

spective as a part of its ministry for teenagers and their parents. With younger and younger adolescents engaging in sexual activity and the high risks associated with it, it is imperative that teens be presented with sexuality from a theological point of view. It is helpful for youth to understand that sex is a gift created by God. The church has an obligation to teach youth how to respond to sexuality in a responsible way.

### 3RD TASK

#### ***Accepting one's physical body***

Physical development is more noticeable in younger youth—most are experiencing rapid changes in their bodies both internally and externally. Girls tend to mature physically earlier than boys. Both girls and boys display contradictory behavior — sometimes within the same hour! Both sexes experience awkwardness, short attention spans, and having to become acquainted with their “new” bodies.

Youths, especially the younger ones, are very inwardly focused (on how they look and how they think they look to others). They are very aware of their differences in maturation and are sensitive to feelings concerning self-image that influence their self-worth. Anything that makes them different from their peers about physical growth and development may be cause for rejection or ridicule from their peers. This, in turn, may result in feelings of inadequacy and rejection. This is one of the reasons it is so important for church youth ministries to be accepting and affirming. The ministry reper-



**What resources or resource people are available in your community or annual conference to provide expertise with ministry needs related to sexuality?**

toire should include games, relational activities, and topics that promote cooperation and affirmation rather than the all-familiar competition and put-downs present elsewhere in our society. Leaders should also be sensitive to games and activities that are very difficult for the overweight or otherwise challenged youth to participate in.

An area of physical development important to adolescents is the role of nutrition. Generally, adolescent boys have larger nutritional needs than girls. Adolescent girls may have poor nutritional habits. A youth's appetite is dependent upon mood as well as hunger. Something may stimulate one youth to snack ravenously and still eat dinner while another young person will lose his or her appetite entirely. Some serious eating disorders to be aware of are anorexia nervosa (self-starvation), bulimia (overeating and purging), and obesity (overeating and lack of exercise).

Take special care for those youths with any major disability. Being a teenager with a physical disability can have a negative influence on self-image and cause unimaginable isolation. In turn, this may affect emotional well-being by causing frustration and depression. These adolescents need the love of Jesus Christ as witnessed by your care and concern as they struggle to come to terms with their physical disabilities in a society that places much value on physical perfection.



**Do you have a list of community resources to turn to when circumstances are beyond your abilities?**

**Mental health and other professionals, school counselors, halfway houses, treatment programs for alcoholism, and other facilities are possibilities.**

Caring adult leaders will help youth deal with their physical changes and needs. Adolescents need verbal affirmation that these changes are normal. Adolescents need to know that they will survive any awkwardness. Caring adults can demonstrate that they have overcome similar challenges and help adolescents gain confidence during difficult times.

Older youths tend to have longer attention spans. Boys catch up with girls in maturity in the areas of behavior, conduct, and thinking process. Physical changes are usually complete by age 18. Older adolescents want the privileges of adults but may not have all the skills needed to handle the responsibility that comes with adulthood. One of the problems of our society is that we have few recognizable, positive "rites of passage" from adolescence into adulthood. Full entry into the adult world of work and responsibility usually does not happen until completion of college, although many teens are working and are consumers with millions of discretionary dollars.

## 4TH TASK

### ***Building interdependent and intergenerational relationships***

Emotional development is difficult to determine in young adolescents, partly due to radical and frequent mood changes. Teens struggle to understand and know what their feelings mean. They struggle to control their feelings in a socially acceptable way. Because of their struggle with self, mood changes are rapid and unpredictable. Mood changes can also be a group phenomenon. You will have experienced this if you've ever tried to have a serious discussion and your group developed a giggle competition or a king of the wisecrack contest. This happens with senior highs as well as junior highs—no age group is immune!

Junior highs, especially, are vulnerable to emotional appeals. This includes product advertising on television. Today's world really confuses our teens because so much of it uses sexuality to make a point. Rampant emotions may cause all kinds of (mis)behavior.

David Shaheen of *Growing a Junior High Ministry* says that "depression can be the result of harsh self-criticism; anxiety can be linked to the first step toward autonomy; dramatic behavior can be associated with a need for attention; a brutal disregard for others' feelings may be a mask for sensitivity and insecurity."<sup>7</sup>

Adults and youth should set guidelines for acceptable behavior before any problems occur. If a disciplinary infraction happens, talk to that individual in private. Being an authoritarian with youth won't help them mature.

We should recognize that deviant behavior can result from conflicts with parents, destructive school relationships, poor self-concept, or drug abuse. Mental disorders such as schizophrenia and depression make their first appearance during early adolescence for some people. Some adolescents deal with conflict by contemplating or attempting

suicide. Any mention of suicide by a youth is a warning sign and should be taken seriously. Another warning sign is the giving away of prized possessions. Youth who have previously attempted suicide, have severe family problems, have experienced the loss of a loved one or other stressful events are at higher risk of attempting suicide.

### Adolescent Development

AGE	10-13	14-16	16-20
	EARLY ADOLESCENCE	MIDDLE ADOLESCENCE	LATE ADOLESCENCE ADULT
<b>EMOTIONAL</b>	Outer appearance/inner self-image Self-reflection and self-conscious Increased sensitivity to criticism	Changing self-perceptions	Stable self-image Self-acceptance
<b>INTELLECTUAL</b>	Syllogistic reasoning to formal operations Argumentative	Propositional thinking Abstract Puns	Think about thinking Idealism & criticalness Formal operations
<b>MORAL</b>	Decided by others—parents, peers Self-interest over others Dependence	Confusion between self and others	Autonomy Needs of others Decided by informed self
<b>PHYSICAL</b>	Onset of puberty Physical changes - hair, height, weight, sexual organs		Physical maturity complete
<b>PSYCHOLOGICAL</b>	Differentiation begins Integration begins	Deals with more complex situations with a variety of responses	Differentiation continues
<b>SELF-IDENTITY</b>	Wants to be the same Need to define personal identity Searching	Clarifying self Low self-esteem	Separate and different Healthy self-esteem Identifying
<b>SEXUAL</b>	Interest in opposite sex	Experimentation sexual encounters Markers of adulthood	Action Commitment & intimacy
<b>SOCIAL</b>	With parents Peer pressure Imaginary audience Worry	Exclusion, betrayal, disillusion Fads, clubs, cliques	Without parents Differentiation Imaginary audience lessens
<b>SPIRITUAL</b>	"Aha!" experience Discussion of "Who is God" abstract values and beliefs	"Who am I" vis-a-vis God	Integration of personal and formal religious beliefs and values "What is my calling"

Compiled by Karl Klaus. Revised by Walt Marcum and Natalie Woods.

Part of our ministry is helping youths deal with stress, depression, and tension in their lives. We do this by using patience, providing positive activities (singing, games/community building, serving others), loving them, and accepting them.

### 5TH TASK

#### ***Finding one's place in a world of relationships***

Developing self-identity is a psychological task. Younger teens search for a sense of identity within groups. In younger teens, the focus switches from parents and family to peers. Being able to establish intimate relationships is a step towards completion of this task. Teens want and need affirmation from the adults in their lives as well as from their own peer group. Younger teens are just beginning to develop a self-consciousness.

Older teens are more involved with a sense of personal identity—being separate and different from every other human. As they progress from mid to late-adolescence, energy is spent on developing significant relationships with same-sex “home-boys” (buddies, pals) and romantic relationships with opposite-sex significant others. Older teens begin to evaluate themselves as well as become self-critical. At the same time, they are starting to think and become concerned about the future. It is still important for these teens to have caring adult friends in their lives. Significant adult relationships provide role models for moral values, understanding, and behavior. Adolescents who do not have adult mentors may model themselves after peers that perpetuate immature, irrational,

and unthinking behavior. Such behavior is a case of “the blind leading the blind” that means slow progress, if any, through a developmental stage. This is one of the reasons it is so important for adolescents to have adult mentors in their lives.

### 6TH TASK

#### ***Preparing to live responsibly and independently***

The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget is the recognized authority on cognitive development based on comprehensive research and theories. His underlying premise is that we graduate through a series of stages in developing our ability to think. We recognize that children are concrete thinkers. Their focus is on what can be seen, touched, smelled, felt, or heard. Adolescents, beginning with junior and middle high school youth, are more able to think abstractly about ideas, concepts, and possibilities.

Adolescents are able to think about their future and the kind of society in which they want to live. They begin to comprehend abstract principles and ideals such as liberty, justice and love. Parents and adult workers with youths often get the full-force dosage of adolescent unlimited “think” power not yet tested with reality. They are passionate, with unbridled idealism about the world. As a Christian community, caring adults provide a safe place for youth to express their visions as well as provide opportunities for youth to act on their beliefs. At this stage, adolescents are developing their critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving skills.

As teenagers mature, asking hard questions of faith and values and gradually assuming adult responsibilities, they meet resistance and learn realistic limits. Adult workers with youth can help intellectual growth by providing interesting and challenging experiences where teenagers can learn firsthand about limits. This, in turn, helps them to prepare to make career choices for economic stability as well as to take on other responsibilities that come with moving out and living on their own. Learning to live as a productive, responsible adult with a fulfilling life begins in adolescence.

Junior and middle high young people need lessons on how to reach out to others, how to mix and mingle, and exposure to the realities of their community and the world. The young people in Texas want to go to Florida for their next summer's mission trip and have recreational time at Disney World. We have to help them understand the scope of what is involved (funding, transportation, time) and deal with realistic ways of achieving that goal versus a trip much closer to home.

A problem with cognitive development in today's youth is that we have gone from a word-centered to an image-centered way of thinking. Mark DeVries' *Family-Based Youth Ministry* brings to our attention that video images (through television, movies, and computers) have completely altered the way young people think, know, and perceive in today's world. Today's youths think and speak in the language of images rather than through logical thought, moral principle, or Christian value. A moral and value judgment of "going by the rules" has no validity

for young people whose small and large screen heroes win by any means necessary.<sup>8</sup>

## 7TH TASK

### ***Acquiring a set of values and an ethical system as a guide to behavior—developing an ideology***

Lawrence Kohlberg, an educator and psychologist, developed a theory of moral development based on a study of seventy-five boys. His theory includes six distinct stages. Adolescents may be found in any of the first four stages.

**Stage 1** is found primarily in early childhood and can be called the punishment and reward stage. In this stage a child makes moral judgments, based on the power and fear of punishment (often imaginary) or anticipated rewards. Size is more important than intentions at this stage. For example, accidentally spilling a large glass of milk is viewed as more serious than intentionally spilling a small amount of milk.

**Stage 2** usually begins around age 7 and sometimes continues through adolescence or adulthood. This stage can be called the fairness stage. Punishments and rewards must be fair. The stage includes a strong sense of reciprocal justice. "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" could be considered the motto of this stage. For example, gang members exemplify this stage with their retaliation mentality.

**Stage 3** usually begins in early adolescence. As young adolescents begin to be able to think abstractly, they are able to imagine what others are thinking about them. This leads to



the peer group becoming increasingly important and authoritative for the individual. People base their moral decisions on family, peers, and the church's beliefs of what is right. Personal conflicts arise when the church differs from the peer group. Youths will usually go along with the peer group at this point. Adults should be ready to talk with youth about conflicting moral issues when the opportunities present themselves.

**Stage 4** may begin in late adolescence or early adulthood. In this stage people recognize that for society to survive, there must be order. Justice for persons in this stage is highly related to following laws and rules. At this point they may believe that the teachings of the church and the Bible require unquestioning obedience.<sup>9</sup>

As leaders, we lay the groundwork for moral development by establishing a "safe" zone where honest, genuine discussions dealing with moral issues can occur. We can help direct young people to the scriptures for help. We can provide a listening ear and loving direction in perplexing times. We have to be willing to let them struggle for their own answers and not push our own opinions on them. Young people must be allowed the opportunity to change their minds about previously stated opinions. We have to teach empathy and compassion for and about each other. We always need to affirm, to listen, to love, and to care for them.

Younger teens have a great interest in helping. Service and mission opportunities (sometimes called "service learning") are a plus to this age group. They tend to see moral issues

as black or white, right or wrong. At this stage, their concepts are still based on external standards (right or wrong is based on what the law says).

Older teens experience a strong need for independence — to make decisions for themselves. They may "buy into" the philosophy of pleasure or happiness above all else. Many societal factors, such as the electronic culture, contribute to the "pleasure principle"; that is, according to television sitcoms, movies, and other audio-visual products, the message is it is okay to think of and for yourself first and to have what you want immediately. It is during this age that teens should start to understand moral principles and the need to make decisions based on justice, value of persons, the stimulus for right actions, and the ability to take another's perspective.

Understanding moral principles and practicing moral principles are still two very different concepts for most teens. This is an area where specific ministry may help teens not only grasp the concept but also have the opportunity to put into practice needed skills. Dealing with cheating, community, criticism, how to stop putdowns, authority/government, missions, and their future are a few possibilities.

There is one other aspect of moral decisions that bears mentioning. Charles Shelton in *Morality and the Adolescent* tells us that loneliness directly influences the capacity of the adolescent to make mature decisions. Shelton reminds us that the fundamental task for all humans, regardless of age, is to grow and interact with increasingly complex dimensions of reality. The problem is



that many adolescents do not know how to focus, attend to, choose, or prioritize goals. They spend much time in distracting activities (i.e., watching video games and movies, listening to music, surfing the internet) or abusive activities (drugs, gangs, alcohol).<sup>10</sup> As adult leaders, we may focus on the questions of “who am I?” “who will I become,” and “why am I afraid to tell you who I am?” Suggested topics are “my future,” “self-esteem,” “perseverance,” “relationships,” “surviving school,” “temptation,” “self-image,” and “spiritual gifts.”

## 8TH TASK

### ***Desiring and achieving socially responsible behavior***

Our faith connects with everything we do — each struggle, each success. Faith is a trusting relationship with God that finds its first representation in people. A nurturing church provides a sense of safety and support. Caring adults—Sunday

School teachers and other adult workers with youth—will offer timely experiences and activities that will encourage decision-making, guide them through developmental task transitions, and always make sure they are aware of God’s love and care for them.

The Christian education staff of the General Board of Discipleship developed the following as the purpose statement of Christian Education: Through Christian education we invite people and communities of faith to be transformed as they are inspired and challenged to know and experience God through Jesus Christ, claim and live God’s promises, and grow and serve as Christian disciples.<sup>11</sup>

This statement reminds us that we are in an ongoing process of “being” and “doing.” There is a need to be intentional about Christian education to all age groups and in helping people integrate the learning with experience, the living of the faith with continual growth and service to others through this faith.

## A Summary of Adolescent Faith Development

Age	Faith Internalization	Characteristics
School Child	Takes on the stories, beliefs, and observances of their community.	Literal interpretations of beliefs, moral rules, attitudes, and symbols.
Adolescent/ Adult	A basis for identity and outlook concerning family, school, work, peers, media, society, and religion.	Mightily influenced by expectations and judgments of significant others. Not formed own identity or independent judgment.
Late adolescent Adult	God is an abstract belief representing moral truths	Sharp self-reflection and examination of beliefs and values

Based on *Stages of Faith, The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* by James W. Fowler



## How do you “tie-in” Christian education with Sunday night UMYF ministry?

### *Summary*

Having an understanding of the stages of adolescent behavior and developmental tasks may greatly increase one’s understanding of junior or middle high and senior high teens. Developmental areas (physical, psychological, sexual, and emotional) and developmental tasks may overlap each other in myriad ways. None is totally independent of the other. Understanding the developmental tasks of youth can help you design ministries that are age-level appropriate and that provide significant opportunities for youth to grow in faith and successfully master the developmental tasks they face.

For ethnic youth, another developmental task may very well be the claiming and embracing of their ethnicity. Ethnic youths may become greatly involved in a search for racial identity as younger teens. Older teens usually become personally concerned with ethnic empowerment and cultural awareness. As with the other developmental areas, it is a goal to help youths complete their tasks.

For adult workers with youth in cross-racial or ethnic youth ministries, be aware that African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American teens experience cultural and socioeconomic factors that may be different from European American teens. Be sensitive to these youth’s unique experiences and treat their perspective with respect and

dignity. Become accountable to ethnic youths by acquiring a cultural education. Because we are a connectional church, the likelihood for cross-cultural and cross-racial ministry is increased through district, conference, jurisdictional, national lines, and local church lines. Racism is a reality for many ethnic youths. It can have a negative impact upon their outlook on life, self-concept, and self-esteem. With this in mind, a wise leader will probe issues tainted by “color” (racism) to determine if the color is green (money or poverty) instead. Sometimes issues are not resolved because the wrong enemy is pursued.

### **Learning Styles**

Each person has certain, specific ways that he or she learns best. To enhance the learning of youth, it is good to vary leading and teaching techniques. This way, over time, you have engaged young people in a variety of learning styles. Doing so insures that everyone will have the chance to receive information in ways that are best understood.

### ***Multiple Intelligences (or Different Ways We Learn)***

Dr. Howard Gardner, at Harvard University, believes that people have multiple intelligences. Gardner identifies seven intelligences: bodily-kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal, linguistic, logico-mathematical, musical, and spatial. He believes that people develop each type of intelligence to some extent, but that most people will develop certain intelligences more than other intelligences.<sup>12</sup>

Knowledge of these multiple intelligences, their characteristics, and how to spot them aids the adult or youth leader greatly in knowing how to present new material for learning. This is especially helpful for the Christian educator and the youth group leader committed to involving the whole person in the learning experience.

See the chart below for a further description of multiple intelligences and the types of activities that use each intelligence.

### ***Innovative Teaching Techniques***

What are some ways that teachers can make learning fun and not boring? We know that sitting in an uncomfortable seat and listening to a lecture is not the answer. Likewise, sitting in Sunday school with senior high students taking turns reading a curriculum resource that goes on and on and concluding with questions that elicit grunts or blank stares as a response is not the answer either.

### Multiple Intelligences

Type	Characteristics	Related Activities
Linguistic (Language)	Ability to relate words to symbols Focuses on hearing and speaking abilities Sensitive to word meanings, sounds, and order Ability to use language to influence, remember, explain, and reflect	Poetry, Storytelling, Debate, Spoken Liturgy, Discussion
Musical	Sensitive to melody, rhythm, and timbre Ability to relate sounds to emotions and human character traits	Singing, Playing musical instruments, Musical liturgy, Composing
Logical-Mathematical	Understanding the concept of number, sequence, and numerical relationships Ability to see patterns of ideas Ability to put together chains of ideas Understanding of cause and effect	Time lines, Flow charts, Cause and effect diagrams
Spatial	Ability to create a mental image and perform actions on the image Sensitive to perspective, composition, and proportion	Building models, Painting, Sculpture
Bodily-Kinesthetic	Control of bodily motions Capacity to handle objects skillfully	Mime, Dance, Sports, Acting
Interpersonal	Ability to notice distinctions among other individuals, particularly related to their moods, motivations, and intentions	Group building, Service projects
Intrapersonal	Ability to understand one's own feelings	Journaling

*Based on the theory of multiple intelligences as described by Howard Gardner.*



### **Learning Style Resources:**

- ***In Their Own Way* by Thomas Armstrong (Plume).**
- ***Seven Kinds of Smart* by Thomas Armstrong (St. Martin's).**
- ***Learning and Teaching Style: In Theory and Practice* by Kathleen Butler (The Learner's Dimension).**
- ***Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences* by Howard Gardner (BasicBooks).**
- ***Seven Ways of Teaching: The Artistry of Teaching with Multiple Intelligences* by David Lazear (Skylight Publishing).**

The chart on page 25 gives a few examples of the wide variety of learning opportunities that can be used.

Leading learning experiences that appeal to a variety of learning styles takes intentional planning. This means that as teachers, we cannot take the risk of "winging it." When it comes to the topics and lessons we want young people to learn, we cannot take the chance of not being prepared. Team ministry via team teaching may be a helpful approach. In team ministry, persons with different learning styles can form teams; the teams in turn, will probably teach with different styles. Team ministries also offer the possibility for teams to include youth.

Teaching means more than reading the lesson together or listening to a speech, although lectures and sermons do have their place. Youth and adults learning together means being active. It means getting involved. Creative teachers and leaders will get youth involved by feeling (write and recite rap or poetry), by watching and listening (make your own

Bible story video), by thinking (conduct research), and by doing (let the youth teach).

### ***Environment Counts***

Youth ministry helps build self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-worth. Youth ministry stimulates thought, creativity, and curiosity. Youth rooms—wherever we teach Sunday school, hold discussions for UMYF or gather at other times—should influence, inform, persuade and excite young people. The color of the walls, the information on the walls, the placement of furniture in the room, plants, art objects, lighting, temperature, flooring and room safety all combine to give a sense of belonging to young people. The type of space also communicates strong messages about how the congregation values young people and youth ministry.

The way information is positioned is very important. To awaken good feelings, hang pictures of past events, especially mission events, below eye level of the youth. To spark conversation, put an item at eye level on the wall. Advertise upcoming events. Put the most important instructional visual stimuli on the sides of a wall and up high. Use the walls of the room to communicate information, to show group progress, and to inspire.

### **Group Dynamics**

A group (a congregation, a Sunday school class, a youth group) has the promise of serving as a "mutual aid system" for its members.<sup>13</sup> In the case of youth, effective small group dynamics occur when group mem-

bers learn to accept rather than reject or even simply tolerate each other. Youth want to feel free to express their ideas and feelings honestly and openly during times of agreement as well as disagreement. Many youth may learn the skill of assertiveness as they speak for or against issues. It is primarily in small groups that youth learn to discuss difficult topics such as sex, authority, or dependency.

The group leader, whether adult or youth, should encourage all group members to participate. This creates a maximum exchange of ideas, information, and options. The group serves as a sounding board against which youth learn to express tentative ideas and where views may change when challenged.

Even better, youth learn to actively listen to each other as well as ask questions of the speaker, to gather more information when needed. There may be times when personal feelings have to be confronted and resolved before group progress can continue. As participants in small group discussions, youth may discover that they are not alone in their feelings which may enable them to deal with their problems more effectively.

Youth, as small group members, learn to empathize and to become supportive of each other. In any group, each member has a *responsibility* to help the group develop and function to be productive. This applies to a Sunday school class, a senior high share group, a junior or middle high serving team, or an entire youth group.

When youth have difficulty in identifying a common interest or in communicating honestly, their small group will not develop or be effec-



**Chapter six of the book, *Superteaching* by Eric P. Jensen (Barron's), has more specific information about how to build a quality learning environment.**

tive. Remember: it takes acceptance, the freedom to express one's thoughts, everyone's participation, active listening, and confrontation with one's feelings for true small group effectiveness.

There are certain subtle but consistent dynamics and stages that groups go through in their development. Knowledge of how small groups act, interact, and react may broaden your small group effectiveness within youth groups and throughout the church as a whole. See the section Group Size and Varieties beginning on page 65 for additional help in developing effective small groups.

### Active Learning Models

Games, recreational activities	Community builders
Role plays, skits	Arts and crafts
Make a video or slide show	Compose a song
Game show	Tell stories
Draw or paint a mural	Camps and retreats
Clown ministry, group pantomimes	Debates, panels
Make banners, posters, bumper stickers	Publish a newsletter
Interview a guest	Solve a problem
Simulation game	Creative writing
Creative dance	Field trips
Mission trips, work camps	Ropes courses, Rock climbing
Backpacking	Food preparation, eating



## Special Concerns

Youth ministry is meant to be inclusive. By inclusive youth ministry we mean to make all youth feel safe, accepted, included, and loved. We want to meet what we call critical needs of youth. "Meeting the critical needs of youth" has diverse definitions, because every youth is unique. We can no more describe a "typical" youth, than we can describe a "typical" church. With each individual comes a particular set of gifts, talents and ideas, but also a set of issues, concerns, and needs. As Christians, we want to see diversity and differences as a sign of God's creativity and a mark of God's presence in the world. We want to do all we can to help youth feel part of everything rather than feel left out.

It is hard to describe the need for belonging and a sense of worth without talking in terms of feelings. In order to understand a person's sense of belonging or not belonging, we must attempt to understand how it "feels" to be someone else.

For a variety of reasons, some folks just have a difficult time sensing that they belong. Many youth have trouble meeting others, are shy or fearful that people will think they are *different*. Many of you are familiar with the fear connected to the word "different." Differences can be in terms of ideas, values, fashion, clothes, music, religion, denomination, or belief system. Different can mean culture, ethnicity, personality characteristics, theology, politics, or the way we take in new information. Whatever differences may exist among people, youth ministry must transcend them. We must strive to create environments which empha-

size unity and community, highlight the wonder and awe of diversity, yet discover the wonder of oneness in Christ.

Regardless of what people of the church say or do, there are plenty of youth who see hints of "*majority cultures*." One majority culture prevalent in the world of youth is that of "*normal*." Society and the church overwhelm youth with notions about one way to do things. We become ritualistic about how we spend time together. We develop habits of conversation, "get with our group," and, without realizing it, leave people out. We must work really hard at insuring that everyone is included. The most helpful way to do this is to create environments which heighten awareness and understanding, to address fears and concerns with directness and honesty, to have high expectations of everyone, and to enhance positive change in individual attitude and sensitivity.

We want to emphasize some strategies for making our youth ministry open to and inclusive of youth with varying disabilities. There are ways to include youth with physical and learning disabilities. We will attempt to foster some understanding of disabilities, and assist you in creating some environments of inclusion. We will look at some characteristics and needs of youth with disabilities, and identify various aspects of youth ministry settings which can help integrate youth with disabilities.

Attention-Deficit Disorder (ADD) is a disability characterized by serious and persistent difficulties in attention span, impulse control, and sometimes hyperactivity. Stimulant medications, such as ritalin, are sometimes used in treating ADD. A

person with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) demonstrates all the characteristics of ADD with the added dimension of being developmentally challenged. Common characteristics may include fidgeting, difficulty remaining seated, being easily distracted, interrupting conversations, or appearing not to listen to others. You can work to make situations more manageable by speaking clearly and concisely, keeping activities interactive, allowing lots of opportunity for movement, and making sure guidelines for behavior are clearly defined and consistently enforced.

Autism is a neurological disorder that interferes with development of reasoning, social interaction, and communication. Some persons with autism are non-verbal, and others use language very concretely and have limited ability to understand or express abstract ideas. Some characteristics of autism may be difficulty in understanding or expressing emotions, tendency to be visual learners, difficulty staying on task, absence or delay of language, and resistance to change in routine. Again, some ideas for creating a more manageable environment include clear and concise communication, attempting to avoid figurative or abstract language, using visual/picture cues and/or sign language, and planning for independence, and positive reinforcement.

Persons with dyslexia demonstrate an inability to attain language skills appropriate to their intellectual ability. Characteristics of dyslexia may include limited reading or spelling ability, confusion with letter or word similarities, difficulty with organization skills, or confusion with sense of direction or time. In addition

to clarity and consistency of communication, manageable environments might include not asking persons to read aloud, providing predictability and structure, designing activities structured for interaction and utilizing all the senses.

Learning disability (LD) is a term used to describe significant problems with one or more basic processes involved in understanding or using spoken or written language. Vision, hearing, or motor skills may be affected, but may not be the cause of the learning disability. Characteristics of persons who are learning disabled may include short-term memory impairment, deficient social skills, ease of distraction, low self-esteem, weak visual memory, low impulse control, or poor eye-hand coordination. You might address the problems of learning disabilities by consistency of communication, rules and guidelines, positive affirmation, appealing to diverse learning styles, or using visuals for all kinds of communication.

Persons with hearing impairments may have mild hearing loss or be completely deaf. Hearing-impaired persons are characterized by mild to severe language and communication deficits; they may or may not wear hearing aids or auditory trainers, depending on hearing loss. Vision is a primary channel for information



**What attributes of “majority culture: are present within your youth ministry: What settings of your youth ministry are as inclusive as they could be? How might you improve your youth ministry’s IQ — “inclusiveness quotient”?**



**Here are some resources to better facilitate understanding of disabilities:**

- ***Unexpected Guests at God's Banquet: Welcoming People with Disabilities into the Church*, by Brett Webb-Mitchell (Crossroads).**
- ***What It's Like to be Me*, edited by Helen Exley (Friendship Press). Children with disabilities have written and illustrated this book which invites the reader to put aside generalizations and myths, and just listen.**
- ***That All May Worship and Loving Justice: The ADA and the Religious Community*, by Ginny Thornburgh (National Organization on Disability).**

mation intake. Environmental considerations may include maintaining good eye contact, speaking in front of hearing-impaired persons, utilizing distinct lip movements when speaking, providing interpreters, learning sign language, orienting others to hearing impairments, and sharing information visually.

Visual impairments affect both partially seeing and blind persons. Some common characteristics of visually impaired persons include wearing corrective lenses, the need for large-print reading materials, difficulty in mobility and focusing, and delayed motor skills. Strategies for increasing accessibility include hands-on experiences, using concrete language regularly, providing large-print reading materials, descriptive and consistent verbal communication, making mobility more manageable, and taking more time for transitions.

Physical disabilities include impairments from birth, those caused by disease or accident, and impairments from other causes. Other health impairments include chronic or acute conditions like asthma or hemophilia or epilepsy. Physical impairments might be mild, moderate or severe. Limitation of motor skills, mobility, vision, hearing, or speech may be present.

A variety of appliances or equipment may be utilized by persons with physical disabilities. Environmental considerations might include accessibility, mobility, space arrangements, and understanding of particular impairments. Remember that limited skills in comprehension, vision, and hearing do not always accompany physical disabilities. It is not appropriate to move crutches, canes, walkers, or wheelchairs without the permission of the persons who own them.

It is very important to understand disabilities and to work at being both accessible and inclusive. Crucial to this whole process, however, must be affirmation and unconditional love and acceptance. As youth and adults in ministry together, we must strive toward mutual and outward appreciation and affirmation. We must create communities of Christ which affirm each and every person. Each of us is unique. Each of us brings to life on this planet energy and variety and enthusiasm. Our energetic embrace of all persons is God's action within us. The variety of our abilities and our limitations is a mark of God's fingerprint on our individuality. Our enthusiasm is incorporated by God into our whole being—differently-abled as each of us is. In all your plans, in all your language, in all your work at hospitality, highlight the



deeper, fundamental knowledge that God is a God of grace and creativity. God has given us talents, gifts, and insights to share. God's created universe gives each of us challenges.

The most important guidelines for being inclusive of everyone are awareness and understanding of others, education about differences, understanding unity in uniqueness, remembering that we are all God's children, and knowing Christ calls us all together in our diversity and uses our gifts, talents, and skills. We are



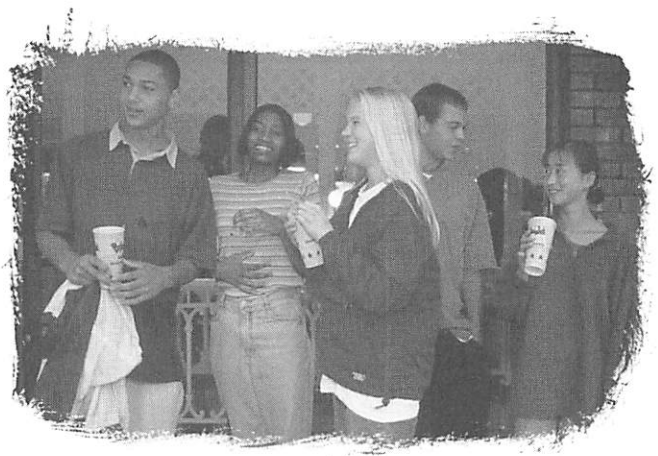
**What kind of lessons could youth create which would sensitize everyone to understand disabilities, and help each person affirm and celebrate the uniqueness of every other person?**

created and loved by God to be in relationship with one another. Let us celebrate our unity and our diversity by being responsive and relational with all persons.



**Notes:**

## Chapter 3: Leadership



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Leadership is more than a gift or a trait. Leadership is also developed through learning and thought. It is enhanced by collaboration and cooperation. Leadership is knowing where your organization is going, why it is going, and how it is going. It is seeing the vision—long term—and keeping the community focused on that vision. Spiritual leadership is taking these qualities one step further. It has to do with looking for or discerning God's activity in the vision and in the work of the community. Spiritual leaders work at helping persons discover their relationship to God. Being in touch with God gives persons in leadership positions a sense of confidence and assurance.

A hefty job description goes with the title *leader*. That is why a popular vote for the selection of leaders is not necessarily the most effective way. Persons most likely to be elected are not always the ones with the potential, the skills, or the call to lead. Sometimes willingness to lead is more essential than popularity. Oftentimes the ability to cooperate will overshadow the ability to *control* a group. Leading in youth ministry requires cooperation, flexibility and openness. It requires listening, interpretation, reflection, and caring. Most particularly in youth ministry, leadership is teamwork—youth and adult leaders who are willing to hear and respond to the concerns, cries,

and needs of youth.

Leadership is also learned. It is developed. It is built in persons who seek to hear God and God's people. Leadership is an acquired skill, a process of re-creation of all three: leaders, followers, and the organization. Each youth ministry is unique to its youth and its church. You will have to assist your youth and adult colleagues in developing the leadership system which best suits your needs. The next section will offer you some insight into how this might be accomplished. Those insights include balancing the many compartments of our lives, building teams, keeping spirituality at the center, and special roles which can be fulfilled by both youth and adults.

### ***A Checklist for Effective Group Leadership***

*Basic skills for effective group leadership include:*

- 1. An ability to listen to others.**
- 2. An ability to summarize where the group is.**
- 3. An ability to ask questions in specific ways to guide the group in a needed direction.**
- 4. An ability to cope with conflict when it arises and/or a willingness to deal with a hidden conflict when the group is avoiding it.**



***Determining Needs in Your Youth  
Ministry by Dr. Peter L. Benson and  
Dorothy L. Williams (Group) is an***

**excellent resource for uncovering the real  
issues youth face.**

5. An ability to be patient when the group needs to struggle with an issue.
6. An ability to distinguish between your own personal needs and the group's needs.
7. An ability to share leadership functions within the group without being threatened that you will lose control of the group.
8. An ability to be comfortable with group silence(s).
9. An ability to keep the group focused on issues rather than on personalities.
10. An ability to help the group to do problem solving and evaluation.

The designated leader, youth or adult, has a lot of power and responsibility in the beginning stages of a group. The group members look for and expect the designated leader's guidance in matters of what will be done and who will do it in the group session. It will take time for the group members to develop the confidence and security within the group to assume leadership roles themselves.

According to Jan Corbett in *Creative Youth Leadership for Adults Who Work with Youth*, the designated leader carries out several functions. In the very beginning of the group, the designated leader has total

responsibility for planning and carrying out the agenda. It is important to have knowledge of the group members as the leader shapes a functional group. This knowledge may be gained through surveys and questioning the group members about perceived and actual needs, abilities, expected experiences, and their willingness to perform.<sup>14</sup>

As the group matures and reaches a point where a decision needs to be made in what direction to go, the leader should present ideas as options. Sometimes youths are reluctant to try new ways of thinking and behaving. The leader may have to be patient and persuasive and provide resources to encourage new growth. Also, the adult should allow youth to lead the group as this is part of the learning and growth process for youth.

Early in the group's life, members of the group usually look to the adult for ideas, even though they may reject these suggested ideas. As the group continues to mature, members become more confident. The leader is then able to work in consultation, asking for and receiving opinions, with the whole group making the final decision. In the group's mature stage, the designated leader is no longer the authoritative leader but an integral member of the group.

## **Building a Team**

Your youth ministry belongs to all youth who attend. Leadership responsibilities should reflect this shared personal investment. A few youth and adults should not be expected to do most of the work. Nor should a few youth and adults

feel they “must do everything,” thereby denying others an opportunity to develop leadership skills. Leadership is a team effort. Leaders share responsibility to learn together, to strategize together, to reach decisions by consensus, and to delegate authority for getting the work of youth ministry done.

### ***Identify Skills***

Different persons have different abilities, and different tasks call for differing kinds of leadership. Therefore, effective leadership is developed in part by matching the abilities of youth and adult leaders with the needs of the job to be done. Some youth are skilled at leading discussions: asking direct questions, keeping the team on task, listening and summarizing, and encouraging all to participate. Others like to take short-term positions as task group chairpersons, responsible for helping people accomplish a particular task. Still other youth like to handle publicity, arrange for transportation, recruit chaperones, plan menus, or coordinate special events like a retreat.

There are many different ways to develop leadership skills; choosing youth to serve as leaders; and creating structures through which leaders set the vision, mission, and aim of the youth ministry. Building a leadership team must be focused on what you want to accomplish, rather than imposing a tried and true but perhaps unconnected structure. Building a team has much more to do with interpreting a vision than installing “a hierarchy of the chosen.” It is about appointing persons who feel called to serve, rather than about electing persons who can do a good job of “being in control.”

Leaders must make decisions, even when the consequences may not be known. Leaders have to risk making mistakes and to challenge themselves to learn new ways of thinking. Leaders must be the initiators of change and improvement. Leaders must be willing to listen to all youth, strive to really hear what is said, and then interpret what they hear to the rest of the team. Leaders must answer to those who elect or appoint them, and therefore must pay attention to ideas and suggestions. Leaders must especially understand the core process which links everything the youth ministry does with the youth. Leaders are charged with keeping the people focused on the vision, the “big picture.”

### ***What Do You Need?***

So what kind of leadership does your youth ministry need? What kind of team do you want to guide you? How can the structure be kept simple, flexible, and adaptable? How often can responsibilities be rotated and continuity still be preserved? What tasks can be divided and shared? How will you ensure that youth involved in all the individual settings of your youth ministry are represented? How will you ensure that family concerns are considered as the team approves and implements plans? What will the process be by which decisions are made? Will you use parliamentary procedure, consensus, spiritual discernment, or some combination?

What kinds of values will guide your leader selection process? Are you most concerned with assigning leaders who do it all, or with empowering all youth to be involved in the ministry? Is power something

shared by all members of the team, or possessed by a lonely leader at the top of a pyramid? Do youth aspire to chair the leadership team or council because it is seen as a position of power and control? Or do youth aspire to share the role of servant leaders seated as a team coming together at a round table? How will your leaders be chosen? Will they be elected by secret ballot? Will they be selected by a nominating committee and recommended for election? Or will persons volunteer to fulfill tasks, based on discernment of their gifts and talents for leadership?

How often will the team meet? What will the team's specific functions be? Will the team be *the* decision-making body, or the body which approves and implements the decisions of others?

Is this team to be a clearing house for all kinds of ideas, events, and activities that come from individual youth? Or will this team guide the work of committees or task groups, hear their proposals, offer needed suggestions, authorize them to carry out their plans, and then evaluate the effectiveness of the plans? Will the team hash out minute details of events or merely approve, disapprove, or refer them to their original planning group?

How will this team exert its leadership? Will it dictate orders and priorities, or will it consult the entire youth community for its directives? Will the team create its own vision, based on the agenda of individual participants? Or will the team create listening structures through which the vision is discovered together by all the youth? How will individual members of the leadership team develop skills needed to lead? Will

the team be a learning organization, which devotes part of every meeting to developing skills or expertise?

How will the team function spiritually? Will it begin its meetings with a prayer, Bible study, or a devotional? What about electing or appointing a spiritual director or chaplain? Or maybe rotating responsibility for spiritual guidance? Will the team members expend significant energy looking for the will of God in their work? How will the leaders understand themselves as spiritual guides to the youth and adults who participate in the youth ministry?

This may seem like a big question-and-answer session. That is because decisions about building leadership teams are made by asking questions, listening to answers, and finding the best fit. There are few mandates about how youth councils or leadership teams must be structured. That is because every church is different, and all youth ministry needs are different. Youth councils *may* include adult leaders and counselors of youth, parents, and representatives from other ministries in the church that involve youth such as Sunday School, fellowship groups, and choirs. There should not be more adults than youth on a youth council. Building a leadership team that meets the needs of your church's youth is crucial and foremost in importance. Leaders must be fully aware of the youth ministry's primary task, mission, vision, and aim. They must be able to interpret and define these as the purposes which drive the ministry.

Providing clarity about the roles of leaders insures the leaders will be effective, well-focused on the good of all youth, and not driven by a

purely personal agenda. Leaders must strive to represent the people who elect or appoint them, and they must be true in that representation. Leaders must understand themselves as servants sent to perform a mission. They must always lift up the basin, the towel, and the cross of Jesus the Christ as a model for all the youth in ministry. They must empower all the youth to love each other as they are, to encourage each other in developing their relationship to God, to provide each other with opportunities for nurture and growth, and to challenge each other to respond to God's call to serve in their communities.

## Covering the Spiritual Bases

Spirituality is inseparable from leadership. Leadership is a spiritual act of serving others. Youth members of leadership teams are most often youth who are seeking God in their daily lives. Finding meaning in the midst of leading is spiritual. Spirituality is more than our individual relationship with God. It includes our corporate, or group, relationship with God. Youth and adult leaders must be as strongly in touch with God as they are in touch with each other and the youth they lead and represent. How can a leadership team move a group toward spiritual depth, stronger faith — even radical discipleship — if the team itself is not growing spiritually? It can't be done!

How can your leadership team develop a system for spiritual growth? You might begin by creating an environment of "sacred space" for your team meetings. The concept of sacred space involves learning to recognize God's presence. It is



**Here's one alternative to the traditional leadership election model. Create a "sign-up board" on a bulletin board, wall, or other area. Place descriptions of each office or team on the designated area. Ask persons interested in serving in a leadership capacity or on a committee to sign up during a specific period of time. If a list contains only one name, that person is automatically elected. Team members can sign up, meet together, and discern their own leadership.**

understanding that all of us, as God's creations, are connected to the holy. Jesus says, "The kingdom of God is not coming with things that can be observed; nor will they say, 'Look, here it is!' or 'There it is!' For, in fact, the kingdom of God is among you" (Luke 17:20-21).

Sacred space can be created with symbols — Bible, chalice, bread, basin, towel, candles. It can be created with intentional discussion about who we are and what we are about. It can be created by music. Sacred space can be created by silence. Over time, it will be understood that the space we fill on earth, and in our group, is sacred. That means that persons are respected, heard, and accepted as they are. It means that when folks are together, each is treated as if he or she were Christ. Persons look to find the Christ in each other. Imagine what would happen if this became the environment of the entire youth ministry. Whether at Sunday school, UMYF, small groups, youth choir, on retreats or trips — all the ground is holy ground. Take off your shoes! God is present.

Youth and adult leaders can help



**An awesome resource for assisting youth in developing spiritual disciplines is *Living in the Light: Leading Youth to Deeper Spirituality*, by Walt Marcum (Abingdon Press).**

others learn to recognize God in each other and in themselves. We cannot, however, recognize the holy if we are not in touch with the holy. Learning to see God comes from working on our relationship with God. Using what we call *spiritual disciplines*, leaders can develop an individual plan for spiritual growth.

Spiritual disciplines include prayer, keeping journals, Bible study, spiritual conversations and worship. Let's take some time to understand these disciplines a little better.

### **Prayer**

What about prayer? Most of us think of praying when we want God to do something for us. We pray before tests. We pray for our team to win the game. Prayer, however, is more about building a relationship with God than it is about influencing God to assist us. Prayer is talking aloud to God, but it is also thinking and reflecting on God's presence. It is listening to God for guidance, for leadership, or for wisdom. We sometimes think of listening to God as meditation or passive prayer. Sometimes, prayer is just that.

But listening is also an active process involving the speaker and the hearer. It takes work to listen to God. When good friends are speaking to us, and we really want to hear them, we take on an attitude of caring. God is our good friend, and we

want to really hear God. Real listening involves clearing the mind and putting one's own agenda aside.

### **Journals**

Keeping a journal can be a particularly meaningful discipline for some people. Keeping a journal can be as simple as writing down thoughts or as elaborate as the letters of Paul. Keeping a journal is like keeping a diary or record of a growing relationship with God. A journal can be a notebook or a folder. In this day and age, writing in a journal can be done on a keyboard and stored on a hard disk.

Keeping a journal can be speaking into a cassette recorder. It can be artwork, poetry, or prose. Some journalers record thoughts, feelings, and emotions shared with God and no one else. Other journalers share those thoughts, feelings, and emotions with other journalers or close friends. Keeping a journal, recording communication with God, can be used as a tool to measure our growth in relationship with God. Looking back, journalers often have new insights about how they felt heard and even answered by God. Also, journalers can use journals as a reflective tool to mark spiritual growth.

### **Bible Study**

Bible study is very important to spiritual growth. The Bible is filled with history, poetry, theology, story, and biography. The Bible is the seeker's book. It reminds seekers of what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do. The Bible answers at least these three questions: Who is God? Who am I? What is my relationship with God? If we are interested in spiritual growth, we are inter-



ested in those three questions. Reading and studying the Bible are about building a relationship with God rather than about being able to prove a point in a discussion. The Bible helps answer other questions like: Is God someone I can really count on? Am I someone God can trust? Will I be true to God with my life, and share God with my friends?

### **Worship**

Another spiritual discipline is worship as a gathered community of faith. Worship has always been the central purpose of the church. We celebrate Christ's resurrection every time we worship. How can we be deliberate about our own spiritual growth without worship? Worship reminds us that we belong to God. Worship involves us in Christian community. Christian community takes the form of an open circle — one ready to accept and love persons where they are. Worship is about opening the circle ever wider. It is understanding that the more we love and the fewer walls we build between us, the closer we come to God. For a fuller discussion of the role of worship in youth ministry read the section "Praise, Prayer, and Worship" beginning on page 75.

If youth and adult leaders are committed to growing spiritually, then they are better able to create excitement in the youth ministry about spirituality. So let the leadership team members develop their spiritual life together. Begin meetings with Bible study and prayer. Build toward an understanding of the spiritual power of mutuality and collaboration. Understand God to be part of every decision. Look to God's spirit

as a source of solutions to problems. Choose models of decision-making and problem-solving focused more on prayer and meditation—on *discerning* God's will—than on following parliamentary procedure to the letter. You can celebrate each decision as an act of spiritual discernment with a prayer or song of thanksgiving. The act of celebration might be spontaneous and different every time, or it may be a ritual which is integrated into the sacred space of leadership team meetings.

### **Opportunities for Growth**

One of the spiritual growth opportunities within the church is ***Disciple: Becoming Disciples Through Bible Study***. *Disciple* is a unique and powerful model of Bible study which is focused not only on facts, but also on learning what the Bible has to say about living the life of a follower of Christ. *Disciple* uses many different teaching techniques that appeal to the diversity of learning styles among youth and adults. *Disciple* lasts nine months. It is not focused on reading every verse of the Bible but is instead centered on reading major portions and understanding broad themes.

The youth edition of *Disciple* utilizes a small group (no more than twelve) and an adult facilitator. The group makes a covenant to read about an hour per day and attend weekly sessions which last one and one-half to two hours. Each week the participants make notes on their reading and share insights gained. The group then watches a twenty-minute video of a biblical scholar who speaks on the theme for the week. The key portion of the weekly



**To learn how to start a Disciple Bible study in your church, call 1-800-672-1789 and ask for the Disciple Office.**

session is called "Marks of Discipleship." The group discusses how they can apply their reading and particular disciplines to their faith life. Because of the time and commitment required, the group grows together spiritually, builds a trust level, and becomes a supportive community.

Another opportunity for youth is called **Branch Groups**. A Branch Group is formed when six to eight youth and one adult agree to meet weekly to watch over one another in love. The focus of Branch Groups is to create a group covenant to grow spiritually together. The group decides together to work on spiritual disciplines such as prayer, meditation, and Bible study. The covenant binds participants to be accountable to one another. This mutual accountability is not meant to be judgmental but supportive. Because each group is different, each covenant is different. Most groups agree to read the Bible and pray each day, to attend worship on Sundays, to avoid harming self and others, and to attend a weekly Branch Group meeting. After twelve weeks, the covenant is renegotiated. The primary focus of Branch Groups is God. Participants are accountable to each other but especially to the Holy Spirit.

**Chrysalis** is another opportunity for spiritual growth. Chrysalis is a three-day spiritual retreat, modeled after the Walk to Emmaus. Chrysalis is open to sophomores, juniors, and seniors in high school. It is a weekend filled with surprises and height-

ened understanding of God's grace. Teens who attend Chrysalis hopefully find answers to questions they have about Christian faith, prayer, Bible study, being a friend, sharing their faith with others, and being a spiritual leader in their local church. Attendance at a Chrysalis retreat requires finding a sponsor who has attended an Emmaus or Chrysalis retreat.

## **Mentoring**

A system depends on teamwork. Mentors are fundamental to the team. Adults help mentor teens through adolescence. Sometimes the adults are parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, or parents of friends. Some of the adults may be pastors, Sunday school teachers, youth directors, or other sponsors of youth ministry. Young people who have significant adults whom they trust are more likely to make positive choices in life. Young people may have peers as mentors, but same age mentors for youth can be problematic because friendships change.

Young people need opportunities to relate to mature Christian adults who model committed relationships that are not cast aside because of conflict or disappointment. Many of today's young people have not experienced this kind of significant, enduring love. A nurturing relationship with a mentor can demonstrate the power of a committed, enduring relationship that is grounded in Christ and Christian principles.

### ***What Is Mentoring?***

Mentoring is a concept that has been used for many centuries by craftspeople. A person wanting to learn proficiency in a particular trade

made a covenant with a master in that field. By trading menial labor for the privilege of learning the intricacies of his or her chosen profession, the apprentice and the mentor achieved mutual economic and knowledge exchange. The length of time and commitment varied. Sometimes a formal contract was involved. The apprentice advanced in status as he or she acquired the fine arts of his or her particular craft through hands-on experience. Mentoring was much more common before the industrial revolution and the advent of our present day school system.

Charles Kishpaugh and Barbara Bruce give several examples of mentoring from historical, biblical, ecclesial, and contemporary perspectives in their book, *Friends in Faith*. A mentoring relationship in the church is a way of sharing and growing in the faith and life for both the adult and the youth.

Many United Methodist churches encourage mentors in the confirmation process. Kishpaugh and Bruce take this concept one step further by suggesting that churches establish a mentor ministry that is not limited to confirmands. The mentor relationship works with any age group. They suggest a three-month model of weekly intentional meetings. Once the three-month time period ends, the mentor is encouraged to continue the friendship established during the more formal time.

### ***Does Mentoring Make a Difference?***

A reliable and caring mentoring relationship may help a youth gain a healthy sense of self-esteem and that, in turn, helps the youth to cope better with life's stresses. A mentor in a



**For more information about Branch Groups, contact the Office of Covenant Discipleship at the General Board of Discipleship, P.O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202-0840; (615) 340-7200.**

young person's life provides an adult who will listen and can be trusted to keep confidential information about the young person. Since young people often need to discuss what is going on in the family with someone outside the family circle, family members should not be concerned if a young person develops a mentoring relationship with another adult. This adult is also available to answer important questions concerning the youth's doubts, hopes, fears, and faith issues.

Youth learn how to communicate, how to behave, how to relate, and how to deal with adults other than parents through relationships with mentors. Youth may gain some understanding of parental demands through interpretation of mentors. In a mentoring relationship with an adult, youth have the peer-free opportunity to ask questions and share doubts about faith and spirituality. This relationship aids youth in establishing and strengthening their faith development as well as helping them connect the faith of the church community with the reality of life.

### ***Setting up a Mentor Ministry***

Initiate a one-on-one ministry by identifying adults who are willing to give the time and effort necessary to establish a nurturing relationship. Invite adults to be prayer partners with youth. Target at-risk youth (from both the church and the community)



**For more information about Chrysalis, contact the Chrysalis Director, The Upper Room, P.O. Box 189, Nashville, TN 37202-0189; (615) 340-7525.**

for long-term relational support, guidance, and acceptance. High school juniors and seniors may benefit from either long-term or short-term mentoring that helps them struggle with changes such as graduation from high school, joining the military, entering college, or joining the work force.

Mentoring is not limited to adult/youth partnerships. Older youth may be paired with children in specific settings, such as mid-week tutoring during the school year or a summer experience at vacation Bible school. Youth may be paired with young people who are new to your youth ministry. Doing so will help new youth become established in the youth group through a peer friendship, gain reliable knowledge of your congregation's youth ministry, be encouraged in their journeys, and establish prayer partners.

Take care in advising mentors how and where to meet — especially as they get started. Places such as a park, mall, or a fast food establishment are good because there are people around (an issue of safety and comfort: such places are familiar, and the conversation can be more relaxed). Mentors should possess high moral and ethical standards for themselves and for the youth they are mentoring. You can help this process by mentoring the mentors. Mentoring is an important ministry for faith communities. Everyone ben-

efits — those who mentor and those who are mentored.

## **Volunteers**

An effective youth ministry system cannot exist without solid and committed adult leaders. In fact, finding adults who are caring and committed in their work with young people and to Christ is the most critical factor in an effective, long-term youth ministry. Finding, training, and nurturing these volunteers continues to be one of the most time-consuming struggles in youth ministry. This dilemma crosses all denominational lines. Enlisting volunteers is a perpetual task and is deserving of much prayer and thought.

### ***Identifying and Inviting Volunteers***

Begin by asking, "Why is a volunteer needed for this ministry function?" This question is so basic it may seem overly simple. You may think a cluster of youth with no one to meet with them is all the reason needed. There are two reasons this perception is flawed. First, making broad, sweeping observations about problems needing solutions generates few, if any, volunteers. Second, a method that first begins by identifying problems that need fixing and then looks for warm bodies to take on the task will always struggle to find volunteers. To combat these two concerns, we need to learn how to become specific and how to begin with people first and problems later.

### ***Getting Specific***

We know from many years of experience that people respond best

when they have plenty of specific details. Broad requests beg for minimum responses. If there is a genuine desire to find and claim a volunteer, specific and detailed information is a must. What is it that you want the volunteer to do? How much time will it take?

Imagine what it would be like to sit in a room and have someone say, "I need someone to marry my cousin." It's so ludicrous there is almost no way anyone is going to stand up and say, "I would like to give it a try." Not knowing the cousin, what is really being talked about, or the context to which the person is referring, no action is forthcoming.

Unfortunately, this is one of the more common ways people try to identify youth workers. Someone will stand up on Sunday morning, or during an Administrative Board meeting and plead, "We need somebody to help with the youth program." Immediately some think, "They must be talking to someone else; I do not have any experience with youth, let alone the time." Others imagine all kinds of red flags: unruly kids bouncing off the walls, jumping on furniture, leaving pizza and soft drinks spilled on carpets, breaking lamps, sneaking away and taking advantage of naive adults, all of which will lead to late night meetings with the trustees wanting to know who's going to pay for the damage. These images are not positive and certainly not helpful. Because possible helpers have only vague information, they don't even consider helping.

To improve the odds, think carefully through each need, identify exactly what task needs attention. At first it might seem all that's required is someone to work with the youth.

Look deeper for specifics. For example, perhaps you need someone to make sandwiches and provide beverages each month. Sandwiches can be made ahead of time, delivered or prepared on site. At this point the "how" is less important than identifying someone to provide sandwiches and beverages for a certain place, at a certain time, for a certain number of weeks. Now, rather than pleading for a warm body, someone can ask, "We need a volunteer to make sandwiches and drinks for the youth one night each month." Someone could now say, "Well, I do not have a lot of time, and I do not have a lot of experience with youth, but I do know how to make a sandwich." The odds of getting a volunteer have greatly increased by being specific.

There is a way to increase your chance of success even further. Rather than making a general plea to a group of people, look for and identify specific persons who have the gifts or skills needed. After identifying people who have the temperament, the ability, and the time to do the ministry needed, approach them. Let them know their gifts have been identified, and their patience and the joy around other people is commendable. Let them know that in helping with this specific task, they are ideal. Give them time to think about the situation and then follow up a day or two later.

This greatly increases the effectiveness of identifying volunteers. Why? Because of specifics: the task is specific, the time is specific, the role is specific— all this helps making a determination easier. People enjoy and appreciate using their gifts and skills. They recognize that someone is asking them to do a specific

job. They think to themselves, "Someone who knows exactly what is needed has thought through this, and I can do the job!"

Specific tasks in youth ministries take many forms. One task might be as a greeter, standing at the door of the meeting room for a half-an-hour greeting and welcoming teens as they enter. Because the task lasts for a specific length of time, the person could go home after the task, if he or she so chooses.

Other examples are:

### **An announcement maker**

One person might come to make announcements. That's all they do. They are not being asked to lead programs or Bible studies, say prayers, or any of the things for which they might feel unqualified. Perhaps they have a certain flair in humor that makes them ideal candidates for taking ten minutes to talk about upcoming events, programs, and activities.

### **Parking lot attendants**

Because many youth ministry opportunities take place at night, parents derive a great deal of comfort knowing there is an adult in the parking lot. This person makes sure the kids are safe as they move from the cars to the meeting site and back again. This is a specific task for which volunteers can feel valuable, chatting with the parents and helping kids to move safely to and from the meeting place.

### **Bible studies leaders**

This person might be very good at Bible interpretation, talking, leading, and teaching. He or she does not have to be adept at or interested in games or chatting randomly about the weather and the latest football scores and so forth.

### **A retreat organizer**

This is someone who handles just the traveling: the arrangements for hotels, retreat centers, or campsites, etc. He or she handles details, organizing and taking care of the overwhelming minutia in these undertakings. This person may be uninterested in leading the program at the retreat, but can wonderfully handle the technicalities of organizing the food, kitchen, meals, and other organizational tasks.

### **Special projects coordinators**

A person might organize, say, a Valentine's Tea. This is a once a year task. This person takes care of promotion, organization, food, and invitations. Identify one person oriented in the direction of the program requirements and approach him or her with this once-a-year task.

### **Prayer and share leader**

This person has a gift not only for praying but also for involving others in helpful and meaningful ways, teaching prayer and more.

As you can see, there are a limitless number of roles or task possibilities. Each time there is a new and specific task, find a way to name it. Once a task is named, identify a volunteer to claim it, one who will then come and work to get others involved with it. Inch by inch each program becomes an event staffed with volunteers willing to give their time in certain specific capacities on a limited basis.

These adults should organize together for an occasional meeting, whether once a month or once a quarter. There they can see how everything and everyone works together for the benefit of the youth ministry. Each person has a role and

a task he or she enjoys and feels good about. This is quite a different method than standing up in front of a group and saying, "Help, I need somebody to marry my cousin!"

### ***People First, Problems Second***

Remember, ministry begins by focusing on the people you serve. In this case, the focus is on young people. In recruiting adult volunteers, consider two groups of people: the youth and the adults who will be spiritual guides for the young people. Concentrate on individuals, observing one potential volunteer at a time. Then begin to design opportunities where the potential volunteers can employ their unique God-given gifts.

To truly set someone free for ministry in the name of Jesus Christ, three things are necessary:

1. **Observe** and name what a person enjoys and does well.
2. **Offer** him or her an opportunity to express these gifts with others and all to the glory of God.
3. **Allow** the person the creative opportunities to use her or his gifts. In this way, inviting people to join youth ministry becomes an opportunity to see people as God does: looking for the special and unique gifts they have developed. Sometimes people do not recognize their talents as gifts at all. The obvious may be hidden from them. For these people, your naming their gift becomes a powerful motivator. Give credibility and encouragement to the things the person does well, let him



**Consider identifying and inviting youth who show potential in specific areas to participate in particular ministries.**

**Let them know you think they have abilities and talents that are needed. Be careful, however, if you invite someone for a particular reason to be prepared to deliver what was promised. Adults and youth alike respond very well to being genuinely appreciated.**

or her know the work is well received. Then begin creatively finding ways for the person to gain confidence in leading. In this way inviting a qualified and highly motivated volunteer to join youth ministry becomes a blessing rather than an annoyance.

Some specific questions you should be able to answer from prospective leaders or volunteers are:

1. **Specifically, what am I being asked to do?**
2. **How much time will it take? per week? per year?**
3. **How long will my responsibility last?**
4. **Who will be working with me? How much experience do they have?**
5. **What resources are available to help me?**
6. **How is this ministry financed? What will I be expected to contribute?**
7. **What training is available? How can you help me acquire the training that I need?**

**8. Will this ministry automatically put me on other church committees or councils?**

**9. What other ongoing meetings of youth (such as leadership groups or teams) will I be expected to attend in addition to the regular youth group meetings?<sup>15</sup>**

### ***Training of Volunteers***

Whether your volunteers are making sandwiches, leading retreats, leading Bible studies, or giving announcements, they need to know what to expect. They need to know the limitations, the vision, the sequence and goals, so everyone is working toward a common mission of youth faith development. An organizer will be needed to articulate the vision for youth ministry in your setting. Then, strategies must be identified and implemented to begin moving toward the vision. Training must be set up that gives everyone a sense of support and direction in his or her task.

Someone preparing food may not know, for example, that the group voted to ban the use of styro-foam cups because of environmental concerns. Knowing these issues, and other group concerns, directions, and intentions enhances effective and careful planning. Youth, volunteers, and staff persons can then feel as if they are being given the best chance to succeed and offer meaningful service.

Training can take place at different levels. There may be district training events, conference training events, or special outside speakers and leaders who can provide the help you need. Perhaps it would be

more helpful to look for potential trainers within the church or community. Many agencies welcome opportunities to extend their expertise to church groups. Find someone nearby willing to discuss various aspects of concern the youth group has. There might be a teacher who is particularly gifted at encouraging kids to open up and talk. Much like seeking volunteers for the youth program, look carefully for people who can teach and train. Help them claim and name their gifts and then create opportunities for them to enlighten the affected volunteers.

Training and supporting volunteers is essential. Training does not have to cost a great deal of money, and it does not have to mean traveling great distances. Small yet very meaningful things can be done during short meetings, phone calls, and through other methods to help volunteers along their way. Without some kind of instruction, though, volunteers can begin to feel they are being used—brought in, given an impossible task, and, because of meager organization, doomed to fail. Volunteers who have no support system to keep them current and energized burn out too soon.

### ***Motivation of Volunteers***

Keeping volunteers motivated often means keeping good volunteers! A basic motivational component is developing a team spirit—an *esprit de corps*—among the adult leadership team. Volunteers who feel they're part of a vital ministry making a difference in the lives of young people will pour their heart into the task.

No one enjoys toiling alone or



being left to wonder whether his or her time and energy are making a difference. A good volunteer administrator helps the members of the team understand their work is critical, important, and appreciated. Find ways to reward and bring your team together. Present them to the congregation at different times; put their names in bulletins and newsletters; arrange for notes of encouragement from the pastor, the board, and other officers of the church. Invite persons in the congregation to be prayer partners with the adults who form the youth ministry team. Appreciation, recognition, and support can make a big difference in motivating others. Be careful not to become involved in false flattery or unfounded praise. Discover your volunteers doing something well and find ways to celebrate and encourage a job well done.

Another approach is to identify volunteers as a team in a visual fashion. Consider using customized silk-screened T-shirts, jackets, or hats—something to designate them as a crew. Help build a sense of identity, recognition, and ongoing affirmation. If you do this well, and with integrity, you will experience less turnover month-to-month and year-to-year. This kind of stability increases the chances that the entire youth ministry in your congregation will help the youth move toward living as faithful disciples.

### ***Involving Youth in Finding Volunteers***

Another form of authentic youth ministry is involving youth in the thinking through, selection of, and invitation to potential adult leaders.



**Many adults deeply desire to be more involved with teens' daily lives, but, because of reasons too numerous to mention, just don't get around to it. Consider actively reaching out to adults. Invite them to attend a game or recital you're involved in. Ask them to assist with a project or idea. What ways can you identify to help adults feel connected and important to your overall youth ministry?**

Begin your recruiting process by asking the youth to list desirable qualities for adult leaders. After a thorough discussion of this list, the group could then be invited to consider various persons within the congregation who have these qualities. Be careful to guide this process and prevent it from degenerating into a gossip session about various peoples' faults and shortcomings. This kind of discussion is never in order and can be particularly hurtful should the details be passed on.

### ***Diversity***

Strive for as much variety as possible. Give consideration to balance in matters of age, marital status, those without children, those with children, etc. Couples with solid relationships can model for the youth the healthy "give and take" that marriage can be. Young adults provide energy and enthusiasm and are close to the youth in age. Single persons may provide examples of commitment to career and God. Middle-aged adults who are not parents of the youth involved provide parenting role models. Older adults provide wisdom, perspective, and time to

interact with young people.

The greater the variety offered to youth, the more likely it is that a particular young person will find at least one adult he or she can relate to as a friend, role model, and spiritual guide. The most effective adult youth leaders are not necessarily guitar-strumming young adults! In fact, young adults are dealing with many of the same issues as adolescents. Your team of adult leaders should strive to include older persons willing to contribute their perspectives of life.

What about including parents and guardians of the youth in your adult team of volunteers? Parents can be one of your best resources, whether they become regular youth group volunteers or not. For more suggestions of ways to involve parents in the youth ministry program, turn to the section "Youth Ministry Is Family

Ministry" beginning on page 56.

How long should an adult youth leader serve? Some are able to continue as effective leaders for years without a break. They are the exception. Most of us need shorter terms in order to recharge our batteries. Experience has shown that most adults need a break from youth work after three or four years. Some may need that break after only one year. Former adult leaders make excellent supplementary helpers and shouldn't be overlooked. They can serve as substitutes, aides, or resource people.

Enlisting and nurturing volunteers is an ongoing task of ministry. No ministry with young people can grow without a cadre of volunteers. Remember, people want to help! Carefully and prayerfully select volunteers who will support youth and help your youth ministry move toward the vision.



## Chapter 4: Liabilities and Legalities



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The winds of change have been at gale force for a good while now, especially in matters of liability. There was a time when society was much more tolerant of mistakes, errors in judgment, poor planning and, sadly, even abuse. Today, the bright light of social scrutiny increasingly floods our lives. Thankfully some of that light falls on the degenerate; unfortunately, some of it also falls on the naive. There was a day when naiveté was tolerated, but now the defense of not knowing any better is long gone.

Youth ministry has become high risk. Because of this reality, serious issues must be addressed and plans must be formulated.

When we adult leaders of youth and children spend time with young people in any setting, we promise to protect them from physical and emotional harm. Even if you and your church have not explicitly made such promise, the legal system of our country considers it implicit in having contact with young people.

If an incident of abuse is alleged against one of your adult volunteers, the lawyers will ask one critical question: "What did the church do to prevent this tragedy from happening?" If the answer is "Nothing; how could we have known," you are now guilty of negligence and you are at the complete mercy of the judicial system. There are only two kinds of

youth ministries: those that are vulnerable and those that are vulnerable and don't know it.

There are some basic steps which go a long way in protecting potential victims as well as naive volunteers and ministries. The first and most critical step is creating a written policy addressing issues of identification, instruction, and the handling of incidents.

### ***Having a Clear Policy***

If a volunteer youth worker is involved in an alleged incident of sexual misconduct, or a youth is injured at a church-sponsored event, what should you do? How should you respond? Where do you turn? These are very serious and critical incidents. The actions and choices that are made from that moment may have a serious impact on the outcome. A clear written policy that addresses response procedures and reporting practices is vital to protect everyone involved. Any institution that involves itself with children and youth simply must have a policy in place which addresses sexual misconduct, abuse, and accidents.

This is no small enterprise, and the very idea can be daunting. However difficult this may seem, to be without a written policy in this litigious society is more than naive; it is foolish. The services of a local attorney should be solicited in drafting a

policy and an appropriate screening form to ensure compliance with state law. It's also advisable that all forms be reviewed by the church's insurance company for their comments. To be really thorough, have your forms reviewed by someone in the local office of your state agency that investigates reports of child abuse and misconduct.

### ***Identify***

Recently a pastor of a mid-sized rural congregation was approached by a middle aged man following worship. The gentleman indicated that he had worked with the youth at another church and wanted to do so here. The pastor had just attended a workshop which taught that screening all those who work with children and youth was essential. The pastor agreed on one condition: that he would run this man's name through a criminal records check. The man hesitated at first but then agreed. The resulting report showed the stranger had three previous indictments for child sexual molestation and a current allegation pending. This is a true incident.

Normally, churches are happy to receive any help offered. It's painful to think we might scare off legitimate and hard-to-find youth volunteers while trying to find the odd individual who has evil intent. Experience shows, however, that parents and the community are quick to appreciate the extra care given to assure a safe ministry.

Set up procedures to screen new applicants. A questionnaire should be used to acquire information which will help confirm identity including a request for photographic identification. Ask where they attend

church before. What roles did they fill? What non-church work was done? What qualifies them for working with youth now? Have they had any training in the areas of sexual misconduct? Have they been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? Do they have a current driver's license and if so what is their driver's license number? Also ask for a few personal references complete with addresses and phone numbers.

Second, create a consent form to authorize a criminal records check with the police. The time to discover that the driver has two D.U.I.'s on the books is before the person drives a vehicle with youth on board! A thorough screening is important to the overall credibility of the persons in ministry with young people.

It's important to have a complete form for every person, even substitutes who are involved in your church's ministry. These forms should be kept together in a file. It's also important that this file be kept confidential. It is the first line of defense in the event of an alleged incident. It shows good faith in trying to keep the youth ministry safe and secure for everyone. Think of the screening procedure in terms of lowering risk.

A church is free to use workers without any evaluation whatsoever, but such a practice involves the highest degree of legal risk. On the other hand, a church that develops an extensive screening procedure and utilizes it for all current and future workers has the least amount of risk. When an attorney asks, "What did you do to prevent this?" you can say, "We screened, and these are our screening practices and completed forms." Next, you'll need to be able to say, "We trained as well."

### **Instruct**

The next component is training. Here the policy is thoroughly explained and reviewed. Here case studies and situation role plays are lived out and discussed.

#### **For example, what do you do if . . .**

*a male member of the church is in the restroom during Sunday school. He is washing his hands as a four-year-old boy rushes in and into a stall. The boy comes back out with a frustrated look on his face and says, "I can't get my pants unzipped. Can you help me? I have to go to the bathroom quick." Do you squat down and begin to work with that child's pants zipper? Do you run as fast as you can in another direction, abandoning that child in a time of need? Do you help out and hope that child doesn't tell his mother, "A nice man in the bathroom took my pants off."*

#### **What do you do if . . .**

*at a lock-in for the youth, everyone stays in one big room. The boys are asked to sleep on the left side of the room and the girls on the right side. The two adult women supervising start a movie at midnight and both fall asleep thirty minutes later?*

Talking through scenarios such as these, establishing guidelines and expectations for behavior can go a long way to educate and prepare the adults in your ministry. This is especially effective for volunteers who may be less aware of possible dangers. Three basic rules are:

1. **The two-adult rule. At no time is any adult to be alone with teens. This may seem difficult to imagine, but it is workable and, all things considered, we don't have a choice on this one.**
2. **In any overnight situation, all adults must sleep alone in a bed. Exceptions are only for a father and son or a mother and daughter. In hotels, where rooms are shared, roll-a-ways are recommended.**
3. **Never be the first to hug or the last to let go.**

### **Inform**

In most states today, if a teen comes to you and informs you that he or she is being sexually abused, you have an immediate legal obligation to report it or you are into some very serious violations. What do you do? To whom do you go? What's an actual report of abuse versus a concern of abuse?

Caution: At no time should you, or anyone connected with your ministry, try to process an incident by investigation, interrogation, or anything else. A good policy statement will, in the event of an alleged incident, guide a person in contacting the proper authorities in a set sequence: no counseling, no confrontation, nothing but following the steps outlined in a policy statement.

The policy should clearly name one person who is the first to be contacted, someone who is prepared for times such as these and, via policy, knows where to go and what to do. They should be trained and updated on reporting procedures to the local authorities, an attorney, and the insurance carrier. What needs to be



**An excellent resource is *Not if, but When! A Crisis Manual* by Tom McAnally (United Methodist Communications).**

avoided at all costs is lots of people scrambling about like the Keystone Cops, each with a different plan. The net result could easily be that of making a bad situation a lot worse.

Another person to have ready in the event of an alleged incident is a person to handle the media. Someone must be prepared to respond to television, print, and radio reporters.

Another person to have at the ready is a professional counselor who can step in with the families and volunteers or staffpersons involved.

Setting up policies to deal with all the legalities and liabilities may seem impossible. Thinking through all of this can launch a person into a kind of quasi-grief process: denial that any of this is really necessary, anger that it is indeed necessary, and finally acceptance and beginning to deal with the promise that we will exercise every precaution in relating to young people.

Insure that you have procedures and processes for:

- Medical release forms and when to use them.
- Permission forms—always use them.
- Vehicle policies—who can drive, what training they should have.
- Worker-screening procedures.
- Supervision and training procedures.
- Reporting outlines.
- Handling the media procedures.

The big picture of these liabilities should give us pause. This is serious and urgent. Yet, in the midst of this distressing predicament, resist any tendency to despair. These adjustments are necessary, yes, but they are also quite helpful. This can become a catalyst to grow closer, more aware of and sensitive to the genuine issues teens face each day. This is a process whereby a team can become more effective and more confident in their ministry to and with youth and each other.

Give prayerful consideration to these and other issues of legal responsibility. Use this topic as a reason to bring in specialists who can guide and inform on these topics. When the initial labor is done and the procedures are in place and working, your overall youth ministry will have a new luster and depth which will serve youth and families in your community well.



## Chapter 5: Designing a Ministry that Fits



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When we say youth ministry, to what exactly are we referring? There are nearly as many different styles, shapes, numbers, groupings, and models of youth ministries as there are churches. Going from church to church, from conference to conference, we have seen every kind of system configuration imaginable. Youth ministry is whatever is going on in your community that presents Christ to youth, leads them to accept Christ, and nurtures them to become more Christlike, and sends them into the world as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

### ***The Book of Discipline defines youth ministry as:***

“encompassing all the concerns of the church and all activities by, with, and for youth. The youth ministry of the United Methodist Church shall include all persons from approximately twelve through eighteen years of age (generally persons in the seventh grade through the twelfth grade, taking into account the grouping of youth in the public schools), who are currently or potentially associated with the church or any of its activities. Youth who are professing members of the church have all rights and responsibilities of church membership except voting on matters prohibited by state law.”<sup>16</sup>

Each congregation should seek an answer to this question: who are the young people we want to serve? Once the ‘who’ question is answered, the ‘how’ question will follow. Youth ministry includes youth in your community as well as those in your congregation. Participation in a United Methodist youth ministry does not require a person to be a member of your church. A non-member who participates in a youth ministry is just as much a part of its ministry as the young person who belongs to the congregation through official membership.

### ***Age Groups***

Youth ministry is defined as involving youth between ages 12 through 18 or between seventh grade and senior year in high school. In actual applications, any combination of grades may be present in any youth ministry setting. There are youth ministries that include ninth through twelfth grades. There are youth ministries that combine seventh through twelfth grades. There are congregations that combine sixth through eighth grades and have another setting for ninth through twelfth grades. Some congregations may offer ministry to children in first through fifth grades, to youth in sixth through tenth grades, and to youth in the eleventh and twelfth grades.

There is no limit to the creative

arrangements that may be appropriate for your setting. A great deal is learned from studying which grades of teens in your church mix well together, which ones have common interests, and which ones share similar gifts and talents. These kinds of insights give guidance for what the most helpful arrangements might be.

### ***Ideal Size?***

Some of the best youth ministries have only two youth in attendance. This size group is fueled by close relationships that simplify planning, allow for change, and make for a condition where Christian community can be created. A small group can meet in one booth at a restaurant, play in one lane at a bowling alley, always find seats together at the theater, and everyone can ride in one vehicle. This isn't to say there isn't something exciting about being with a large and diverse crowd. However, the more youth there are, the longer the planning curve and the more resources and adults will be required.

### ***Choice of Activities and Times***

Another important issue in building a youth ministry is asking what needs can different ministries meet as Christ is offered. Some congregations offer choirs and nothing else. Others offer Scouts or Explorer posts and nothing else. Some are focused on business meetings and missions. Others focus on prayer and study and occasionally take youth to events, or on outings sponsored by someone else. Some youth meet every Sunday night, some meet on Wednesday nights. Some meet for two hours,

some meet for three hours, some meet in the afternoon, some meet in the evening. Having access to a gymnasium or large grassy field might offer possibilities for recreation. In some settings more could be made of giving focus to singing, reading, studying, or traveling because meeting in the church isn't feasible. In each case the component that typifies a growing, dynamic youth ministry is being clear about the young people whom it wants to serve. Once a congregation is clear about the people they wish to serve, then they can respond creatively to meet those needs. The key is that the issues have been carefully, prayerfully, and creatively thought through.

We must let go of the notion that unless youth fellowship meets on Sunday night, with twenty or more kids, a youth worker, and volunteers serving meals, playing guitar, and leading songs, it's not a real youth ministry. That structure (unless of course it's ideally suited to your context and arena) isn't something everyone should strive for. What most of us need is to be creative and to focus on the youth we want to serve.

### ***Summary***

In establishing a vision for what a youth ministry should be, where it should go, and what it should do, keep the single vision in mind, "youth thriving in the world as faithful disciples of Jesus Christ." If we do anything less, we relegate ourselves to being more a club than a church. The one thing we can do better than any other organization is witness for Christ, and we should struggle to do that well and always. How this vision is made manifest varies with



as many possibilities as there are minds creating and thinking. Some will journey faster toward that vision than others, responding to the needs, concerns, and attitudes in the context of their unique ministries. Some will journey more slowly, needing to take time to establish trust with the youth in their setting. Longer term relationships are often necessary to reach the wounded and defensive souls that some youth hide away.

## Community Building Is Not a Place

Relationships are very important to youth. Relationships are the primary energizing force in the lives of most adolescents. Friends and families help us to define and formalize our identities. Relationships provide us with trusted friends with whom to discuss important questions like “Who am I?” and “Am I okay?” or “Do you like me?” Community building is a process of assisting youth in forging such relationships, not only with other youth and adults, but also with God. Community building may be the single most crucial task of youth ministry. It is so crucial that to do it poorly is worse than not doing it at all.

Community is a concept quite common to the church. The church was designed and created in community. The church was formed when a community of believers made covenants to meet together and remember Jesus. The church started as a community of persons who combined all their possessions, assets, and gifts. These persons sometimes lived together, often ate together, and found meaning in being



**In thinking about creative ways to structure your ministry, remember that it's easier to imagine what it should be than it is to actually make it happen. Often, moving from where a ministry is to where it ought to be can take months and months of effort. Don't let this stop you from beginning, but remember that patience is indeed a virtue.**

together, knowing that the living Christ was in their midst. Christianity did not begin as an individual relationship with Christ. It began out of the disciples' need to be together, to tell stories of their encounters with Jesus, and to share things about their own sense of belonging to Christ, and to each other. In the New Testament, the community of faith is called *koinonia*—a Greek word for fellowship, participation, mutuality, or ministry together.

Jesus envisioned this community of faith. He spent his life helping others to catch and embrace the vision of unity. On the night of his betrayal, Jesus prayed that his followers be one: “As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me. The glory that you have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as we are one. I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me” (John 17:21-23).

## The Process

Community building is the process by which we develop a ministry of togetherness. We are called to be in ministry *together*, both to

each other and to the world. Community building is a process through which youth and adults develop skills at building relationships, then practice them by interacting with each other. Through this process, youth can develop long-lasting friendships that will nurture and encourage them in their faith journey. We find meaning in relationships that challenge and stretch us. We find fulfillment in relationships that nurture and encourage us. Challenge, stretching, nurture, and encouragement take place through communication. Community building is a system through which people learn to communicate, practice communicating, and then go out to teach others to communicate.

Community happens in an atmosphere of patience, persistence, and commitment. Community cannot be forced or socially engineered. It is developed through the sharing of ideas and insights, and through personal revelation. Community is built through team activities such as decision making, problem solving, strategizing, and consensus building. True community requires change. The process of community transforms people. Without commitment to change from everyone, community does not happen. True community requires contribution. Each person must be willing to take an active role in the creation of something he or she values. Youth need to see that their gifts and talents contribute to a whole which is greater than any individual—the community of faith, the realization of oneness and unity.

### ***Communication***

It's fairly obvious that communication is an important factor in the

formation of community. It has been noted that communication—one on one, in small groups, and on the telephone—is crucial to most teenagers. It is how we get to know other people. It is how we establish rapport and relationship with others. Talking and sharing ideas is a way we develop trust between ourselves and others. As trust deepens, levels of intensity and intimacy grow, and friendships are developed. Youth ministry that helps youth form and nurture friendships is building community. Youth grow to really like each other and enjoy spending time together. Before long, they are spending significant time with each other away from the church, and developing in other friends an interest in sharing this community of faith.

As youth begin to form community, they become energized and invite other friends to come and experience it for themselves. Youth ministry that encourages and demonstrates this sense of community welcomes new friends and embraces people who visit. Within this kind of Christian bonding experience, youth find both freedom and security. With a sense of freedom and security comes a willingness to be more vulnerable, to reveal more of the self. Freedom is knowing that one can be true to oneself. Security is knowing that revealing one's true self will not bring about criticism or judgment, but rather support and encouragement. A sense of community, which celebrates both individuality and commonality, will compel youth to understand a Christ who encourages and embraces with unconditional love and acceptance.

**Guidelines**

Now it's time to consider some guidelines and get down to the business of building community. First of all, this stuff doesn't happen automatically. It's not just a good idea that will happen if we think positively. Face it, community building takes work! Being intentional about community building is essential to its happening. This process takes time and commitment to seeing it through. You cannot expect instant success. A youth ministry characterized by a strong sense of community is one committed to working at it over time, and one which has failed at community at least as many times as it has succeeded. Community transcends generations but never becomes easy to achieve or maintain.

Community building must respect individual needs. Just as we each have a preferred style of learning, we have a preferred style of interacting with people. Working at community is a group process. Some youth are more comfortable with groups and processes than others. Be aware that introverted people find this more difficult. Never force community on anyone. Some people just need more time than others.

Community building is limited by size. It has been noted that this happens most effectively in small groups. When small groups nurture community, their work influences what happens in a larger groups. Youth must be invited to form community. Community incorporates everyone. Community building is focused on Christ. Time must be spent understanding, modeling, and participating in Christ-like behaviors. Community is built on the principles

of Christian faith — God's grace is available to all, God created and loves us all, God call us to love and serve all.

Community is built through a variety of experiences. There are many written resources available for youth who wish to promote community through youth ministry. Those resources are helpful and can assist you in developing strategies for working at it in your own settings with your own youth. The essential element for building community among your church's youth is knowing them. You will be required to spend time to develop experiences that will help your youth to work together. You will need to ask questions and then really listen to the answers.

You will need to think about the ages and stages of your youth. Will they move slowly and suspiciously? Or will they embrace the process and move very quickly? Will you have to deal with an attitude of reluctance to try new things? Will you be greeted by overwhelming enthusiasm? Will you be ready for either level of response? How will you facilitate the process of building community? Who will do it? Will you make a commitment to the "long haul"?

Be prepared for every kind of response. Be prepared to answer questions from people uncomfortable with "touchy-feely" stuff. Be sure to reassure everyone that they never have to participate in something that takes them out of their comfort zone. Help youth to discuss their fears or concerns about self-disclosure. Provide a variety of opportunities that will help youth to gain confidence and develop trust of others. Service-learning, camping, rock-climbing, rappelling, ropes courses,



Here are some printed resources to assist you in your efforts at building community:

- ***Youth Group Trust Builders*, by Denny Rydberg (Group).**
- ***Building Community in Youth Groups*, by Denny Rydberg (Group).**
- ***Up Close & Personal*, by Wayne Rice (Youth Specialties).**
- ***Sharing Groups in Youth Ministry*, by Walt Marcum (Abingdon).**
- ***55 Group-building Activities for Youth*, by Sam Halverson (Abingdon).**
- ***Mudpie Olympics and 99 Other Nonedible Games* (Abingdon).**

even guided meditation and relaxation experiences will help youth to process their feelings.

Community is as unique as the persons who form it. Arriving at the right plan for your youth ministry will take time, effort, thought, and discussion. It will require prayer, meditation, Bible study, and thoughtful discernment. Done poorly, community building will be a waste of time. Done effectively, it will have a profound spiritual impact on all your church's youth. Trust God for insight and wisdom. Trust yourselves to listen and find ways to meet needs. God will bless your efforts and your results.

### **Youth Ministry Is Family Ministry**

The primary social system of youth is the family. Parents and family will always be the most influential forces in the lives of teenagers. Every

family is different. No measuring stick exists by which to judge families "normal" or "abnormal." In order to be helpful and influential, the church must have an attitude about family which is flexible and adaptable. Families are formed by marriage, remarriage, and no marriage. Families are grandparents raising grandchildren. Families are interracial, multicultural, and interfaith. Many teenagers do not live with either biological parent, through adoption or for other reasons. There are foster families, and families created when friends take in teens because they can't live at home. Families are made up of people who live together, live apart, love each other, and argue with each other.

The church cannot replace the family unit. Neither other youth nor adult youth workers can replace parents. Youth ministry, however, is family ministry. Youth ministries must see it as their task to work with parents and youth, helping them to communicate and to understand each other. We must help both parties to understand the impact they have on each other. Parents represent God, church, school, life in the United States, and life on the planet to their children. Choices and decisions parents make impact the choices and decisions their teens make. Decisions teens make affect the way their parents interact with them. Family structures represent reality to youth. The family system is the model by which youth form their own relationships and families.

How can your church and your youth be in ministry with families? It can help by strengthening and supporting them. This can be accomplished in a variety of ways, both

understood and implied. Philosophically, youth ministry can strengthen and support families by being “pro-family” in mission, vision, and aim. This philosophical stance includes constant and effective communication, remaining mindful of the tremendous scheduling pressures of most families, making it easier for youth to participate in family time by scheduling fewer but higher quality events and activities, and providing resources and opportunities for families to be together.

Because parents and families do have an important role in successful youth ministry, it really makes sense to build rapport and relationship with parents. Communication is key. Letting parents know what you’re planning is much more popular than only depending on youth to relay the information. Communication with parents is more than informing them about events and activities. It is telling them what you’re trying to accomplish as a youth ministry. It’s asking them to tell you how you can be supportive and helpful.

Many parents feel unskilled and unable to do their job. The church can assist them in developing more effective parenting skills. You can create parenting classes, parent support groups, purchase books for personal and group study, and plan parent-youth discussions. While all parents have some common fears, concerns, and opinions, there are significant differences between single-parent families and two-parent families. It will be important to offer opportunities for both types of parenting needs.

Your youth ministry can also create workshops for families — on topics like family dynamics, human sexuality, spiritual growth as a family,

and playing together as a family. Create family clusters, groups of families which gather from time to time to have conversation about what it means to be a family. Try to include in those clusters at least one family in which a parent is gifted in relating to youth. This kind of relationship will encourage growth in individual families and among all the participants. Because some families seem organized and others seem disorganized, this kind of opportunity will allow youth from both extremes to experience something different. They will hopefully appreciate the situation of others and have a new sense of gratitude for the family they have been given. Young people not attracted to other youth-oriented activities might really appreciate such an insightful arrangement.

Youth ministry as family ministry is not merely concerned with working to strengthen and support families in their organizational and relational skills. Youth ministry as family ministry is faith-oriented. Focused on the process of assisting families in their spiritual growth, youth ministries must encourage families to worship together, to pray together, to think together. We must encourage families to grow in their relationship to God together. We must offer a more biblical guide to understanding of family, and one which understands Christians as God’s family. We are responsible not only for loving our blood kin, but for loving all persons in the name and in the spirit of Christ.

Involving parents in youth ministry is a most important way of communicating that your ministry is pro-family. Creating ways in which youth can be involved with church and spend time with family is family min-



**Youth can help interpret to the church and, most especially to families with youth, a pro-family philosophy. Here**

**are some suggestions.**

- **When you recruit parents to assist with youth ministry, always offer free child care provided by the best possible caregivers.**
- **Be sensitive to the wide spectrum of family and household models.**
- **Remember to be inclusive of varying financial and physical needs of families. Plan events with all incomes in mind.**
- **Monitor language you use about families. Words have power to hurt or heal. Adjectives like “traditional,” “dysfunctional,” and “perfect” mean different things to different families.**

istry. Ask parents to serve on your youth council or leadership team. They can listen to other parents and bring valid concerns, ideas, or questions to the decision-making process. Recruit parents to teach Sunday school or be a sponsor for UMYF or other organizations. Ask parents to volunteer as vehicle drivers and chaperones. This will clearly communicate to parents that they are needed. It will also give them a clearer picture of what your vision for ministry is.

Involving parents in youth ministry also allows youth and parents to see each other in new and varied settings. If you are young, seeing your parent in a leadership situation with other youth might give you a new picture of reality. Being a youth ministry leader or participant in front of your parents might do the same for

them. Some youth are very comfortable with their parents being around. Others are less than comfortable. It is always important to ask a youth how he or she feels before inviting a parent to come along on a retreat, or accept a leadership or advisory role. Involving parents and other family members says that they are important; that they are part of the team. Youth ministry is a team effort, a family process. Gone are the days of keeping parents and family out of youth ministry.

Varied family situations make curriculum or programming that builds from week to week impossible. Youth whose parents are divorced or separated have little control over their attendance patterns. Affirming their presence one situation at a time is better than creating any system of “perfect” attendance, or designing learning options which rely on information shared at an earlier date. Creative, adaptive scheduling is required in order to accommodate schedules of youth who are in different places on different weekends. Provide regular opportunities for youth to describe their scheduling needs. Try your best to plan events or activities around those times so that all youth have greater accessibility to what you are providing.

Effective youth ministry is constantly transforming. Family structures are continually changing. Families are systems which involve activities and behaviors which lead to particular results. Youth ministries are the same kind of system. Melding the two systems makes for better families and better youth ministries. Each has so much to offer the other. Ministry to families with teenagers is a process which requires constant listening.

Specific family needs must be discovered and rediscovered through a regular system of assessment and goal setting. An attitude of flexibility and willingness to change or modify programming, even “midstream,” must be adopted. Christ offers the grace required for the necessary cooperation. Youth must provide the energy, the strength, the enthusiasm, the will, and the commitment to design youth ministry which is family ministry.

## **Connections Between Church and School**

In youth ministry, we talk a lot about relating our faith to our lives and experience. School is certainly real life for youth. It is important that we say a little about how to connect who we are at church with who we are at school. That’s not all, however. Being involved in church is one of a whole range of options these days. It isn’t the “only game in town” any more. We need to talk about how to be the church at school and especially how to embody Christian faith without preaching. We need to talk about how the church can be present in the real world without being bothersome or stifling.

The connection between church and school can range from praying with youth before school to leading lunchtime Bible studies to supporting car washes and T-shirt sales. While many schools do not allow adults to roam the halls, there are ways that volunteer and professional youth workers can be involved at school. Some schools will allow adults to visit students for lunch. Other schools have “open-campus” lunch policies. Why not take advantage of

that by meeting at a particular place each day or each week? Some youth ministries have enjoyed this practice for years. Many schools, however, are adopting “block scheduling” models and moving back to closed-campus policies.

It is imperative that adults who want to go on school campuses visit the principal before attempting it. In this situation, it is wise to get permission before the visit, rather than forgiveness (which may be unavailable) after the visit. Most principals do not want “religious hassles,” and that is understandable in light of the variety of opinions about the place of faith practices and expressions at school. Parents, teachers, and administrators all have varying opinions about how involved the church should be. As long as you promise to leave your Bible and any church pamphlets in the car, many if not most will welcome you. Integrity and reputation are essential characteristics of adults who want to make their church’s presence known at school.

The rule about getting permission applies to meeting youth off campus, too. Parents should know that you make it a practice to meet for lunch. They need to grant permission for their students to leave campus and travel to your meeting place. Establishing liability boundaries is an important issue as well. Talk to management at the restaurant, grill, mall, or other meeting place. Youth who congregate at eating and other establishments are often watched with great suspicion. Letting personnel know who you are and that you are responsible for monitoring behavior will help them to be less apprehensive.

If you really want to involve your youth ministry on campus, don't stop there. Adults can join the PTA or assist the student council with projects like decorating for a dance. Or you can volunteer in classrooms. Youth might invite their youth workers to speak at school organization meetings or events, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes or Young Life, or even to give a baccalaureate address. Service clubs might invite adults to speak on service learning or other topics. The topic doesn't always have to be spiritual or biblical in focus. Being Christian has to do with attitude as well as content.

Youth and adults can support other youth in the church by attending concerts, plays, and games. Sitting with parents at these events is a great way to build relationships with them. Sometimes, if parents know an adult is interested in their child, they will call and invite them to ride along to events. Some parents offer extra tickets which can be added incentive! Your youth ministry can buy an advertisement in an event program or yearbook, expressing support of youth. You don't have to buy a full-page ad, but a little publicity never hurt any youth ministry. Meanwhile, it is impressive to youth and parents to see that your church cares about young people.

Attempt to plan events and activities which will complement rather than compete with school schedules. You could plan a dance or a party to begin after a game. You could serve a meal before a play or concert. Try not to plan a really important retreat or event during playoffs or exams. If you can't avoid doing so, make it easy for youth to leave early or arrive late. Help parents coordinate transporta-

tion to events after a game or activity is over. Do what you can to make events your youth ministry sponsors accessible. Be flexible and realistic.

Understand school as a potential partner. Do your part to participate with schools as providers of the assets which all youth need to receive. Work with school administrators and teachers to promote healthy lifestyles which lead to survival, growth, and development of self-esteem.

## Reaching Youth in Your Community

There's a philosophy running through many youth ministry circles these days: "Youth Ministry Is Community Ministry." Many organizations outside the church are ahead of us in understanding that every sector of the community has a part to play in making a positive difference in the lives of youth. Every participant in the community must take responsibility for offering youth support, boundaries, structured use of time, educational opportunities, positive values, and social competency skills.

Young people are in need of people and groups that care for them, love, and affirm them. They require standards and guidelines that help them adapt their behavior to the norms of society. Youth crave opportunities to develop their interests and skills. They need role models who challenge them and assist them in making good decisions. Young people are in need of structures that provide them with freedom to develop as independent, open-minded thinkers. These are all roles the church can take on and needs to embrace.



Reaching youth in the community is not a new notion. Youth ministry, as we know it, began in about 1889 as outreach to youth (into their twenties) in the community and intended to *keep them off the street*. Youth ministry was focused on teaching about Christ, guiding youth in the planning of social and political activities, and providing appropriate fellowship settings. Youth of the community were invited to be part of the planning and leading processes.

Youth work, as it was called, was not that different from what we do today except insofar as it did not presume that youth needed a church background to participate. Many churches today understand this to be a prerequisite. This is a dangerous assumption because more and more people today are unfamiliar with “church.” They have not been to worship. They haven’t attended Sunday school. The language of the church is foreign. The images which seem familiar and comfortable for the church are not familiar or comfortable to persons who are “unchurched.”

We do a lot of talking in the United Methodist Church about membership losses and recovering people who have strayed, pulled away, or disappeared. Some have joined other churches or denominations. Others have become disenchanted with the whole idea of religion and church. While it is important to identify those persons, it is probably more important to look within the community for new persons. However, many people unfamiliar with Christianity often have preconceived notions about what “church” is. Some understand the church to be focused on a list of

rules handed down from an angry God of conditional love. Others hear about God’s unconditional love, but experience exclusiveness and conditional love from “church people.” As the saying goes, “We are the only Bible some people will ever read.”

Is it possible to maintain the integrity of the gospel while presenting it differently? Is it possible to love youth into a relationship with Christ, one which greets them as the person they are first? Meeting basic needs of youth first, talking about Jesus later, is a less popular philosophy to embrace. It is very tempting to remain a “status quo” youth ministry. However, no matter how you read the scriptures, God does not require that we meet specific conditions to deserve God’s love. God reaches out and loves us anyway.

During a recent consultation on Generation X presented by the General Board of Discipleship, a twentysomething young adult made the following observation: “Drugs, alcohol, sex, violence, and gangs are not the problems. They are symptoms of a tremendous need among our generation for unconditional love and acceptance.” That person went on to explain that “getting high or joining a gang is attractive because when you are involved in them you are unconditionally loved and accepted.” The challenge for our youth ministries is designing ministry that really offers unconditional love and acceptance.

Could God be calling your youth to reach out to those whom other groups are unwilling or unable to deal with? As another old saying goes, “We are the only hands Christ has on this earth.” We must strive to be the body of Christ in the midst of a world which is broken and hurting.

Holding a vision of being Christ's hands, and reaching out to youth who are not "like us" is controversial, and not always popular. Knowing your youth and your church in terms of vision and theology will help you assess their willingness to venture out into a world of risk and uncertainty.

Would your church support a commitment to invest years and emotion in loving and caring for "troublesome" youth? Would your church's youth accept others who might never conform? What about youth who do not claim Christ? There are costs to this brand of youth ministry. Youth, adult leaders, parents, pastors, and congregations will have to spend time in prayer, Bible study, and discussion weighing those costs.

It is easy to forget that the world is not the safe place we try to create for youth in the church. *Reality* is not as pretty, as carpeted, or as stained-glassed as some of our church buildings. This is why our mission must be to meet needs and transform people with unconditional love. We must avoid the temptation to maintain tired, old models of youth ministry which pat reality on the head and fail to develop within youth a personal sense of call to ministry. God calls us to reach out to all youth with Christ's powerful, grace-filled, transforming love. We can't do that sitting in church and waiting for them to come to us. Recognition of that fact is half the journey toward radical transformation of your vision of ministry.

What's the community around your church like? Is it in an urban, inner-city location? Is it suburban? Who lives in your church's neighborhood? Have you ever met persons in your neighborhood who don't attend your church? What interests do your

youth have which are presently not being addressed by your ministry? How can your youth ministry be involved in assisting youth with educational opportunities? How can your church minister to youth in a variety of crises? Who among your church's adult members can be a mentor to young people with few or no adults in their lives?

Are there older, abandoned houses near your church? Some churches purchase or lease older homes and remodel them for youth to meet in. This is not done to keep youth out of the existing facilities but to reach out to youth who are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with church buildings. What about annexing your youth ministry, moving your meeting place to another part of town — a different kind of building?

Coffee is back. Many youth are meeting at coffee shops to discuss the Bible or other faith issues. Why not do the same? Meet youth at one near your church, or create one of your own. Getting out of the carpeted, stained glass building might be just the thing for your youth. Is there a park near your church? What about a playground? Maybe an old warehouse or office building. Maybe somebody has a barn to meet in. Create your own version of a loft youth ministry. How about that parking lot where everybody meets on Friday and Saturday nights? Why not relocate and do your part to bring new energy and excitement to your community?

Relocation is not the only means through which ministry can reach youth of the community. Working cooperatively with existing youth-serving agencies of all kinds is another means to accomplish the

task. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, Campfire, and 4-H are youth-serving agencies that are embraced by the United Methodist Church. What about YMCA/YWCA, or Big Brothers/Big Sisters? What youth-serving agencies exist in your community? Does your church have any relationships with them? Which ones have a vision, mission, philosophy, or theology that match those of your church? Does your church have a distaste for any youth-serving agencies? If so, why?

Many people within the church make the mistake of thinking that youth outside the church have no interest in religion. Youth have a need to ask and answer moral, ethical, and religious questions. They do not, however, have to do that work within the constraints of traditional church models which may be unfamiliar or confining. Caring youth and adults can work together to create safe, sacred space in which this work can be done. The secret to designing and maintaining that kind of environment is to remain flexible, open-minded, and willing to listen “between the words.”

To reach youth in your community, your ministry must be accessible. Each person has a life experience different from those of others. Generalizations about people we don’t know only create walls and keep persons from being themselves. Create and maintain a safe and affirming atmosphere which welcomes young persons familiar and unfamiliar with the traditions, rituals, and language of church. Be open and accepting of the dress, language, and music of youth, while promoting strong religious and denominational values. Don’t assume anything about dress, jewelry, or accessories.



**Because youth are more familiar with styles of dress, varieties in music, and the definitions of language used by youth, perhaps you could do a workshop or training day for adults which can help to sensitize them and encourage open-mindedness. What other ways can youth help adults learn to be more “youth friendly”?**

Provide opportunities for youth to express their unique and individual gifts, talents, and skills. Train adults to interact honestly with youth. Initiate relationships with other youth. Don’t wait for them to converse with you. Do all in your power to be stewards of Christian faith and hospitality. See Christ in all. Be Christ to all. As the old MYF motto says, “Christ Above All.”

## **Strengths and Challenges**

It goes without saying that the church is not just a building. It is nice to have a place to meet, but out in God’s world is where the church needs to be. So United Methodist youth and adults who want to be in ministry should be in touch with their community. Every community has strong assets and challenging liabilities. There are both youth-friendly and anti-youth features to each community. Weighing the strengths and challenges can give you a clear picture of the reality surrounding your church building. Both the inhabitants of your community and its youth-serving organizations can be good resources.

Here are some questions you might want to ask as you consider the prospect of studying your community.

- Who are the young people we want to serve?
- What do we think we will learn?
- What are our preconceived ideas?
- What do we hope to learn?
- Why do we want to learn it?
- What will we do with what we learn?
- To what degree are we interested in welcoming and including all youth within our community?
- Will we embrace the richness of diversity surrounding us?
- Will we use the information gained to help us be more inclusive?
- Are we committed to serving our community in any direction God seems to lead?
- Is our commitment to service limited in some way?

Having a sense of what your mission is and what you hope to do with the information available will help you decide if it is a task you want to attempt.

If you want to study your community, you will need data: demographic data — economy, employment/unemployment rate, ethnic and cultural diversity, critical needs of church and unchurched youth, and resources available. To collect data take a walk around your church's neighborhood. Design and distribute surveys. Interview people. Read census reports. Become informed about local, state, or federal organizations

available to assist you with gathering and studying data. Contact private organizations that might study demographics using the kind of questions you want answered. You don't have to reinvent the process. In fact, it is possible that much of the work has already been done, and the information is readily available.

It is hard to make contact with organizations when you don't know they exist. How do you find out and make initial contact? Ask persons who spend their professional time working with youth to assist you. Teachers, social workers, detention officers, church youth workers, and physicians will not only have opinions, but will also know of persons and organizations that can help you. Many communities have lists or directories of agencies. Phone directories, other churches, elected city and school officials, hospital administrators, community center directors, and counseling center staff can all be excellent sources of information.

Perhaps you will discover an agency located near your church which focuses on meeting the critical needs of youth and wants to work in cooperation with a congregation's youth ministry. Another strength might be connections your youth ministry makes with hospitals or nursing homes that need volunteers. A third strength might be discovering an organization with grant money available to youth ministries who want to serve in their communities. Still another strength could be making contact with a family who becomes involved in your church. One more strength would be that family drawing and welcoming others into the church because you reached out. The possibilities are limitless.

A challenge might be a crisis phone-line on the verge of collapse which could be supported and revitalized with finances and volunteers provided by youth and adults from your church. Perhaps you will discover that many youth in your community are looking for a church to be part of but don't have transportation. Perhaps they are fearful of not fitting in, not having the *right* clothes, or of being excluded for any other reason. Youth and adults might have to rethink the whole issue of inclusive versus exclusive attitudes or behaviors. A challenge might be high youth involvement in drug or gang activity. Providing an alternative might be just the opportunity your church is looking for.

A challenge might be finding out the majority of your youth are not interested in inviting or welcoming others. Would it be an opportunity for growth or decline? Would that kind of information be too devastating for some of the youth?

What if the youth all got very excited about the possibilities presented by studying your community? Do you have the resources to design and create something unique and "cutting edge?" Would your church support you? If your church would not support you, would you do it anyway?

The point of knowing your community's strengths as well as its challenges is to provide content for discussion and reflection, Bible study, and theological debate. Becoming aware of community assets will strengthen your awareness of diversity, possibility, and opportunity. Becoming aware of community liabilities will hopefully intensify your sense of mission and outreach. Working hard to utilize community



**A highly recommended resource for churches interested in assessing their youth ministry in terms of its impact on the community is *Reality Check: A Guide for Redesigning Youth Ministry*, by David Otto (Discipleship Resources).**

agencies and resources in a variety of servant roles will help your youth develop caring skills and a sense of call to ministry. Embracing and welcoming new and diverse persons into your church's family will renew your sense of what it means to be a baptized and empowered follower of Christ because "we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another" (Romans 12:5).

## **Group Size and Varieties**

Although any size will work, numbers affect the group and what you can expect from each size group. Scott C. Noon in *Building Attendance in Your Youth Ministry* identifies varying group sizes and types. A group of three to six people is a "family" group and is an excellent size for conversation. A group of seven to twelve people is commonly referred to as a small group. This size group has several advantages as a good size for support groups, brainstorming, task forces, and teams for games. This number offers different perspectives for discussion and generates creativity among group members.<sup>17</sup>

For effective small group functioning:

**1. Limit group size**

For effective discussion needs, limit the group to ten to twelve persons.

**2. Make a group covenant**

Group members should agree on the group's purpose. How long will the group meet? Who leads the group? If needed, who records appropriate data? How will the group carry out group decisions? Who evaluates the group process?

**3. Clarify roles**

Everyone should know what to expect from each other by knowing the role(s) of each person present.

### ***Group Roles***

In *The Skills of Helping Individuals and Groups*, Lawrence Shulman writes in detail about the dynamics of group roles. A destructive role that may emerge in groups is that of a scapegoat. One example of scapegoating might occur during a discussion on relating to the opposite sex. Think about this scenario: a group of middle high boys picks the boy who seems least "manly" or least likely to date anytime soon. The boy chosen has the personal characteristics which members most dislike or fear in themselves. For middle high school boys, it may be the fear that no girl will find *them* attractive enough to date.

The internal leader, a youth in this case, derives authority from the group members. This person takes risks by voicing the group's feelings

to the adult leader. The person playing this role may change, but the group will often follow this person's lead into unresolved areas of growth. Some adults may see the internal leader as being a threat to their "authority." In actuality, the internal leader can be a positive group catalyst for group growth.

The diversionary member has a range of behavior from extremely inappropriate and disconnected (a youth practically bouncing off the ceiling in verbal and physical actions) to mild (a youth lost in a daydream while the rest of the group actively participates in a lively discussion). An adult leader needs two skills in this case. One skill is the ability to tolerate diversionary behavior. The second skill is the ability to search for the underlying message to help the individual or group deal with it. The behavior could be because the youth is acting out a personal concern, or the youth could be exhibiting behavior felt by the whole group.

The gatekeeper is the group member who diverts the discussion whenever the group gets close to a difficult subject. This is usually accomplished with diverting action or humor. This person usually has deep issues concerning the topic and is afraid.

The defensive member is particularly defensive about admitting the existence of problems or accepting responsibility for his or her own part in the problem. This person finds it difficult to take suggestions or to receive help from group members.

### **Group development**

There are generally four stages to a group's development.

#### **Stage One**

Group members familiarize themselves with the group and find out how they best relate to the leader(s) and to each other. Very little interpersonal contact occurs.

#### **Stage Two**

Group members begin to express feelings. Feelings may be negative and defensive because members feel competitive and/or apprehensive.

#### **Stage Three**

Group members have developed trust in each other and feel more positive about their experience together. The group develops a sense of belonging and group pride.

#### **Stage Four**

The group has matured in group dynamics. Members are able to change their attitudes and ideas, and are learning how to take gains from the group into their everyday lives.

### **Group problems**

Symptoms may arise in a small group, signaling that there is a problem. These symptoms include apathy, anger, boredom, impersonal comments, conflict avoidance, gross confusion, and inappropriate humor—any jokes or humor that put people down. Other group symptoms signifying problems within the group are constant requests for goal clarification (because the goals presented so far are unclear) and persons vying for attention or group roles. When these symptoms appear, the group leader should become involved by helping the group focus, identify, and deal with the issue or concern.

### **Space that Works**

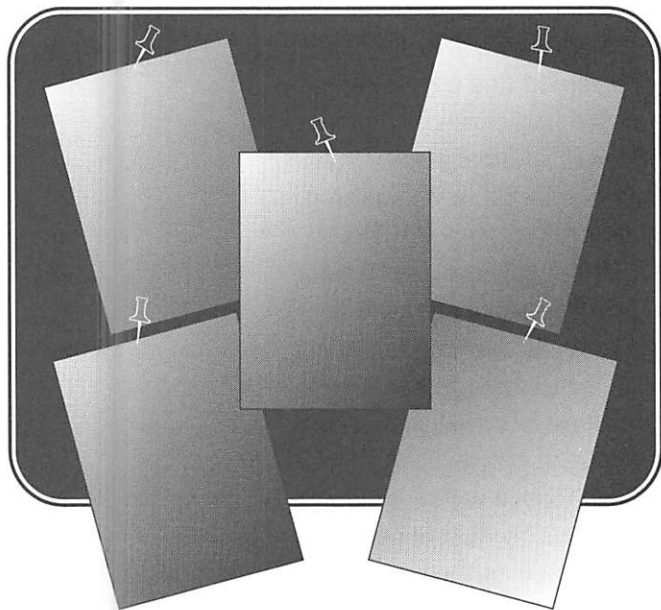
Youth, like everyone else, want to belong. Unfortunately that is becoming harder and harder to do in healthy ways. Teens today will claim their identities through the way they walk, dress, what they consume or don't consume, how they think, if they want to think, the way they cut their hair, and innumerable other ways. Each becomes a way to identify with a group, to find a place to belong. A vital part of belonging is having a place, whether it's the tree-house, hideout, clubhouse, bedroom, home, cottage, boat, locker room, theater, lab—wherever one goes for a sense of belonging. Providing members of a group with a leader and resources is a big step toward helping them belong to something that is tangible and real. However, they still need to have a place where they "own" the space. So, where do they go? They go wherever there is a space that works.

### **Separate Places**

In an ideal world, senior high youth want a space that belongs to just them. Mid-high school youth want to be wherever the senior high youth are. In a less-than-ideal world we sometimes have to combine mid-high and senior high youth together. This is less than ideal for the senior high youth because one of the things they're leery of is being treated like or having to identify with younger youth. If there is any way possible—if the group is large enough and can be separated along age lines—try to find two different spaces. If you can do that, you'll be well on your way to success.



**Every event or trip ought to have a specially appointed photographer who “focuses” on documenting the entire experience in pictures. These can be put into special photo books and placed in the appropriate room. In addition to the photos, include keepsakes and other paraphernalia as well. These photo records are a wonderful source of fun.**



If you cannot find two spaces, try creating two distinct spaces in one large room. Establish which seating areas will be used by which group. Also, establish common understandings about boundaries for using the space. Rites of passage that involve younger youth moving into the area set aside for older youth will be helpful. If there are no such demarcations, no rites of passage, there will be a lower sense of ownership and identity, and the space will not work out very well for either group.

### ***Ambiance***

Decorating the space can become a nightmare with the trustees, unless some caution is exercised. Some trustees want nothing on

the walls except the color of paint they put there thirty years ago: no tape, nails, nothing! In these situations one must creatively respond. Perhaps you can use moveable wall panels or screens, with one side covered with youth paraphernalia and pictures. The other side of the panels can be covered with more traditional Sunday school format or whatever is appropriate. Then the panels can be spun around, depending on who is using the room at the time. There is no limit to the creative responses which can accommodate both the trustees who are trying to be faithful to their tasks and the people who are trying to claim space for the youth.

If the trustees don't mind things on the walls, that doesn't mean you have to go crazy with day-glow paint, bizarre pictographs, garish sayings, words of revolution, and phrases of injustice by adults. Find a way to enhance the space without seeing how shocking the room can be. One way youth like to decorate is with pictures. While many rooms are covered with six-dollar posters, consider pictures of the youth themselves taken at various events, programs, and retreats. The pictures can be simply taped up or nicely framed as financial resources allow. Cover the walls with pictures of the young people, where they've been and experiences they've shared.

Getting back to the belonging issue, this is a great way of letting them, and others, know this is where they belong. They can return years later to look at the pictures, showing friends, family, and even themselves that they were here, they had a home, a history: they belonged. Some churches even make a composite framing of the pictures of the



graduating seniors each year. This is a great way to keep a running archive of the youth who have shared in the life of the youth ministry. It shows people who have gone before that they aren't forgotten and witnesses to the younger youth the legacy of which they are a part.

Amid the pictures, hang and display other paraphernalia which highlights experiences, happenings, and places the youth have known. Give the room a sense of youth's history, a feel of their vitality, their vigor, their faithfulness. This becomes a great way of making a space work. Other kinds of decorations that might be considered are banners, the current vision for youth ministry, a large copy of the UMY benediction from which they can read at the closing of youth meetings, etc.

### **God's Presence**

Consider creating a "chapel"—an area that is more sacred than other parts of the room. Establish a place where the group goes for those times of honor, respect, calmness, and peace. Place a light in the chapel area that symbolizes the presence of God in this area. This light could actually travel with the group on special retreats and events.

### **Seating**

Kids today seek the soft seats wherever they go. When it comes to seating, fluffy is supreme. If they're doing things, such as eating (where food might be spilled) metal folding chairs are acceptable, even desirable. But when they will be sitting for longer periods of time, soft seats are the ticket. Where adults might prefer their cushions lodged neatly in

### **The UMYF Benediction**

*The Lord bless you and keep you.  
The Lord make his face to shine upon  
you and be gracious to you.  
The Lord lift up his countenance upon  
you and give you peace.*

NUMBERS 6:24-26

a couch or chair frame, youth aren't nearly as concerned about those arrangements. Just give them soft places into which they can melt. Couches, chairs, bean bags—anything that is soft—is the seating of choice.

How seating is arranged is also important. Preferences among youth change depending on the situation. Small talk is better in smaller groupings and arrangements rather than one large circle. When it comes time for the main meeting in a full group, sit so everyone can see everyone else's face.

### **Alternative Spaces**

If your church has no space to dedicate to the youth, it's time to put on the creativity hat again. How about moving from house to house? Perhaps a steady rotation of three or four homes, one place each week, always in the same order so the youth can anticipate each meeting, would work. A sign placed near the street indicating "This is it!" is a helpful addition. Consider too a traveling box of ornamentation: a symbolic banner, a lamp or candle to symbolize God's presence, an easel with a board that lists prayer con-



**Whatever space is used, be sure that it is appropriate—Is the size right? the decor? Is it adaptable, equipped, and accessible? What is the impression youth have when they enter the space for your youth ministry?**

cerns or events, and anything else that gives a setting a feeling of belonging and community.

How about looking for vacant buildings that are for sale or rent and haven't been occupied for a while? Talk to the owner (not the selling agent) and see what options there might be. Many times it's difficult, or impossible, to insure a vacant building. This makes owners nervous. In offering to meet in the building once each week, without messing it up, you could be providing a way for the owner to insure the property. This is a win-win situation for all.

Consider, too, a large restaurant that might have a back room which could be reserved on a regular basis. This way a light supper or snack could easily be worked into the meeting. Even though a restaurant is shared space, it's still very cool for the youth. There is a certain "grown-up" appeal to having their own time and space. There are schools and many other options. It is surprising what unique opportunities can be realized with a little hard work and a lot of determination.

## **Balancing Commitments**

Even young people can remember when days and nights were less

busy, less stress-filled, and less chaotic. There's just something about our times that seems to accelerate the events and activities we're trying to cram into a day. This phenomenon challenges youth ministry more than ever before. How do we keep busyness in check? How do we address personal busyness, schedules of volunteers and participants, conflicting activities, academic schedules, rehearsals, practices, sports, clubs, and an attitude that we should try to do it all? Why is it that when our teens finally do get to church, they are so wiped out they can barely function?

One obvious answer is to offer them the one thing that no one else can: peace, stillness, and quiet. Churches today can offer an opportunity to be still without having to perform, think through, give back, explain, or account for anything! Churches can offer the space, the place, the relationships, and the acceptance. Youth ministry can be driven by a vision of Christ who is more than willing to take our yoke of busyness and give us a lasting peace. What are some practical ways this can be done?

## ***Accepting Limitations***

The first thing we all need to do is accept the limitations and realities of our present day and age. We cannot fight true busyness, but must learn to work with it. No matter what event or activity we might have, what meeting we intend to hold, someone is going to have a conflict. What do we do? Cancel? Change the time and day? No, just meet young people and volunteers where they are and go forward. Hold the event!

If there is a potential for fifteen youth, ten are hoped for, and only two show — don't cancel. Take the two and have the best time possible, "for where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20).

This is not to suggest that if we're aware ahead of time that a major conflict will involve a good percentage of youth, we should ignore it and forge onward. Consider changing the camping trip that conflicts with an SAT weekend and instead go for an "After SAT" festivity. This would be an excellent way to provide a place for everyone to come together and talk about taking the test. Planning a Christian concert on a Friday evening during football season is also not recommended, especially if a high percentage of youth is involved in cheerleading, football, or band.

In obvious situations, think about alternatives. Have the concert on a Saturday night, or a Sunday afternoon. What you need to avoid is competing head to head with regular activities that involve the majority of the youth you are attempting to serve. Forcing kids to make unnecessary and difficult choices isn't fair or helpful. Everyone loses—you, the kids, and other volunteers. This becomes especially difficult for parents who feel that poor planning is happening—and you, the one in charge, are responsible.

Have you ever noticed weeks go by where there is nothing worth watching on television, then suddenly half a dozen shows you would love to watch all come on at the same night and at the same time? Have you felt frustrated? It's no different with youth, volunteers, and parents who feel locked into no-win



**On your next retreat consider spending more time where everyone can be alone and quiet without having to report what they thought about, did, or would have done; offer true relaxation without having to account for the peacefulness. Busy people benefit most from this kind of opportunity because it's usually this kind of relaxation that is first sacrificed when they feel overrun.**

situations with competing opportunities for youth ministry. They may get the feeling God seems to require unfair demands on time.

There is a way to move forward through this quagmire: teach youth the gifts and skills of discernment. Discernment is a skill they can develop which helps them to stay connected to God's will for their entire lives.

### ***Discernment***

In the discernment process the goal is for persons to seek God's will for their lives at various moments. Discernment invites us to ask and then listen for responses from God on matters of choice and guidance. We begin to ask:

"Where can I be most helpful in this situation with the gifts and graces you've bestowed on me: at practice, the concert, at the recital, or at church? Where can I do the most good work? Where can you, God, through me, touch the most lives? Where do I most gain your strength? When do I need to search my own heart? When do I need to be present for others? When might I be an answer to someone else's prayer? When do I need prayer?"



Here are some resources  
to help you design your  
youth ministry:

- ***Lifegivers, A Practical Guide for Reaching Youth in a Challenging World* edited by Steve Games (Abingdon).**
- ***Youth Ministry Handbook* by Ed Trimmer (Abingdon).**
- ***Working With Black Youth, Opportunities for Christian Ministry* by Charles R. Foster and Grant S. Shockley (Abingdon).**

These kinds of questions, filtered through the process of discernment, can lead to helpful decisions as we go through life, day to day. There aren't specific and concrete steps which guarantee we'll always come away with a clear understanding of God's will for our lives. However, there are practices, ways of living, that tend to heighten our ability to live close to God and have a greater sense of God's Holy Spirit moving in our lives.

*These are practices that lead to discernment:*

#### **Prayer**

This is a critical practice in matters of growing close to God. Daily prayer is crucial. Almost everyone, even non-believers, tend to offer up desperate prayers when trouble looms near. Unfortunately, these prayers often feel hollow or shaky at best, because they are not founded on a sustained and daily prayer life. Prayer is for all the times of our lives, the safe and serene as well as the chaotic and strange. Prayer is vital and primary.

#### **Bible reading**

Like prayer, reading scripture each and every day is a key to spiritual well-being. In time, through repetition and familiarity, the wisdom and guidance in God's Word will lead us in small yet powerful ways. We say the Bible is the sacred Word of God, phrasing which speaks warmly to various segments of our society, but seldom to uninitiated youth. It's difficult to convey to some young people that the words in this book can come alive and speak to us individually, as they are studied and read. Too often the Bible is read the way textbooks are read and with the same amount of enthusiasm. With this kind of casual and reluctant approach, the book remains as literature and lifeless history. Daily reading is the best way to begin to realize the direction, guidance, and encouragement that is available through its stories and teachings. The Bible is a life-giving book!

#### **Worship**

Regular participation in congregational worship is vital to discerning the movement of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Sharing with others in the sacrament of Holy Communion and finding strength and direction through prayers, hymns, and liturgies are powerful experiences that help us know God's direction for our lives. We need to worship with the whole family of faith in our congregations.

#### **Having a spiritual mentor or belonging to a small group**

Few of us can grow in faith without having an objective voice or sounding board. We need the advice and guidance of a trusted partner or the help of an accountable commu-

nity to share the load of the journey of life.

### **Acts of kindness**

The Boy Scouts of America have a slogan of “do a good turn daily.” This is sound advice and is a discipline everyone should make a part of their spiritual journey. Doing anonymous unexpected kindnesses becomes a blessing. By sensitizing ourselves to the needs of others and looking for opportunity every day, we allow God to rely on our hands, eyes, and ears to act for the good of others. The more opportunities we seek, the more we’ll find. The more we do, the closer to God we grow.

These simple suggestions offer the basics of building life-long skills for youth, adult volunteers, for church, indeed, for ourselves as youth leaders! Seek God’s will, listen for God’s response, and faithfully act in all the rhythms of day-to-day life. We all have busy times, we all have

conflicts of time, and the most we can do is to urge one another to rely on the Holy Spirit to guide us as we form disciplines which guide our lives. If, from time to time, that takes a youth or volunteers away from some ministry you consider important, support them, care for them, and love them. Honor their choices and discernment when they have shown good discipline in exercising it.

### **Know Your Audience**

Relationships with youth and volunteers are the most important considerations in dealing with busyness. There is no substitute for knowing what they struggle with, what they face, and then supporting them through it. Work with them in this godly process, support them faithfully, and expect good things to grow as a result. Face struggles fairly and courageously, and trust that all things will work for the good and the glory of God.



**Notes:**

## Chapter 6: Nuts and Bolts

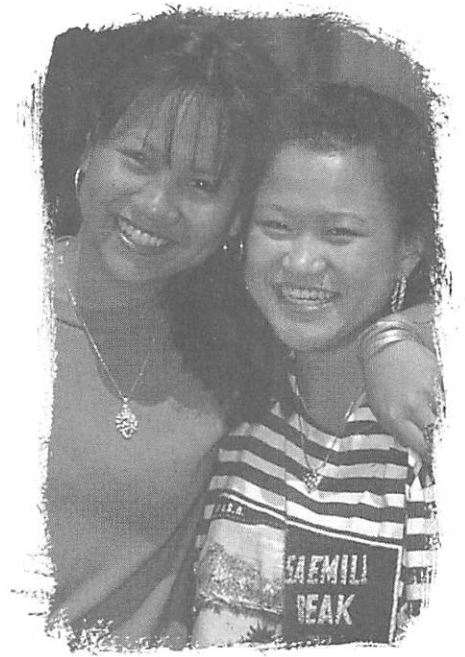
Purchasing a new swing set for the backyard, a new ten-speed bike, or any other unassembled item means doing some minor work. The photo of the purchase on the outside of the box shows the swing set in full use. As you open the carton, however, you see the task suddenly loom large and ominous before you; there is nothing but parts! Initially there may be a feeling of confidence that this can't be all that difficult. Soon however, after all the big pieces are laid out, there are the dozens of little plastic bags full of bolts, screws, washers, and other minute pieces. And the big picture is unattainable without the basic nuts and bolts necessary to put it all together. The system is a sum of its parts.

Youth work is much the same. Visions and primary tasks, when firmly in place, next require parts, pieces, and patience. There are questions about budget building, taking retreats, planning worship services, building trust levels and a community spirit, finding a place to meet, doing evaluations, and many more. Each of these parts is important and, if done poorly, will have a negative effect on the big picture. Good organization, however, with care and lots of others helping, can mean lasting and meaningful ministries.

### **Praise, Prayer, and Worship**

Sunday mornings throughout the United States, people gather for worship in their respective sanctuaries. The worship may be organized and carried out in a very formal manner complete with the pastor and choir in robes, the ushers in uniform, acolytes, and a full-range pipe organ playing Handel. In another sanctuary, the gathering place may not have an organ or a piano. You may not be able to tell the minister from the parishioners based on attire, but there is an air of expectancy that cannot be ignored.

The sanctuary may be bare with few accessories. Or it may be one with fine views and beautiful, expensive furnishings. The congregation may not murmur a whispering word throughout the service. Or they may shout "Alleluia," "Praise the Lord," and "Amen" throughout the entire worship experience. One congregation prefers exclusively the established hymns sung as written with no improvisation. Another congregation joins the choir as they sing, clap, and sway to the beat of the music of traditional or contemporary gospel music. Just as the worship varies from congregation to congregation, it also differs for youth when they gather to worship.



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Worship may be called by other names — prayer time, devotions, or praise. It may be as simple as going to the altar for quiet time with God. A worship service may consist of songs, an opening and a closing prayer, a scripture reading, and a few words relating to the reading. Others may add “joys and concerns.” Effective worship offers youth an opportunity to witness, to pray, and to commit to God. Worship must be transformational: the praise invites change for worshippers to become more like Jesus Christ, who is the focus of our praise. Ritual is important in youth worship. Worshipping often invites this sense of ritual.

Youth worship may take place in the youth room with participants sitting in a circle. There may be candles or other symbols such as a cross or a shell in the middle of the circle to designate the altar area. Youth worship may take place in the chapel or sanctuary of the church. As innovative as youth are, worship takes place in many different kinds of places — around a campfire, on the banks of a lake, on a mountain top, in a parking lot, or on a bus — and any time of day or night.

The “sermon” may evolve by watching the setting of the sun, or a trio of youth may talk about how God has worked in their lives. Following the close of a mission or service project, the worship may include a meal where partners serve and feed each other in silence. Youth often flourish and find the grace of God in stories, parables, and fantasy. They need concrete images spoken clearly, simply, and specifically.

Youth worship may be the most important component of youth ministry. Be conscious of creating times

for worship in evening settings and other times when youth gather. Youth worship, especially worship led by the youth, is a critical aspect of youth ministry.

Worship, as in all other aspects of youth ministry, is done with affirmation for all involved. The planning of youth worship is done *with* youth, not *for* youth. The goal of worship—whether it is with youth or in the congregation—is transformation.

### ***How do we engage youth in congregational worship?***

Some congregations encourage Youth Sundays, where the youth are responsible for that morning’s worship service. Youth worship in this context may mean that young people are singing in the choir, acting as greeters and ushers, reading the scriptures, leading the congregational readings, offering the prayer, and even giving the sermon. In other words, you can substitute youth for the adults who normally fill these roles and follow the customary order of worship.

A youth-planned worship service may include a youth liturgical dance, a dramatic reading, a speaking choral group, a rock opera, or a very thoughtful lectionary-based sermon given by a young person. The possibilities are endless with a willing, youth-friendly, supportive congregation. Remember: the act of worship is the attitude and the intent. All persons—those leading and those participating—are part of the worshipping community.

For “regular” Sunday morning worship, we engage youth in worship by having them actively participate in the worship service. On a



regular basis ask that youth do some of the readings or lead prayers. Invite youth participation with those who plan worship. Encourage the young people to use the hymnal and read or sing along with the congregation. Active participation engages the mind! Ask those who plan worship to allow the youth choir or dramatic reading groups to participate on a regular basis.

### **Youth-led Worship**

Youth-led activities and events create ministry that allows youth the best opportunities to respond. Effective youth ministry enables and empowers youth to vision, strategize, and act! Vital youth worship is Christ-centered and biblically based. It speaks to the concerns and issues of youth.

Youth come to church to be spiritually fed. We must offer Christ and the gospel in ways that make spiritual growth possible. Choose scripture for worship based on issues in your youth's lives. If the worship is structured on biblical messages, it is built on solid ground.

Create a team to plan worship—prayers, joys and concerns, the scripture, the message from the scripture, and songs. In worship, just as in any other transformational setting, youth get much more out of it if they are active participants in the process. Youth are growing up in a very high-tech world with sounds and images in megabytes. Encourage energy, variety, and creativity in worship. The scripture, prayer, and interpretation of the scripture (the message) have infinite possibilities for presentation through language, video, symbols, music, dance, puppetry, clowning,



### **Worship resources:**

- ***Creating Contemporary Worship*, by Terry Dittmer (Concordia).**
- ***Creative Ways to Offer Praise for Sunday Worship*, by Lisa Flinn and Barbara Younger (Abingdon).**
- ***Creative Worship in Youth Ministry*, Dennis C. Benson (Group).**
- ***Living in the Light, Leading Youth to Deeper Spirituality*, Walt Marcum (Abingdon).**
- ***Spiritual Growth in Youth Ministry, Practical Models to Help Your Young People (and You) Grow Closer to God*, J. David Stone (Group).**
- ***Youth Plan Worship*, Betty Jane and J. Martin Bailey (Pilgrim Press).**

mime, drama, and skits. Audio and video-based Christian music may be a helpful tool. Be grounded in scripture, then fly with your imagination.

### ***The Liturgical Calendar and Colors***

Worship is celebration! We celebrate not only with music and song but with color and design. The seasons and holidays of the church year all have particular colors and symbols associated with them. These colors and symbols can provide a visual way to help us celebrate important times in our worship life. Some African American churches use Kente cloth and other designed cloth for robes, stoles, and paraments. Be creative as you incorporate visual elements into youth worship. Dare to be unique.



**For more information on the church year, check out *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (The United Methodist Publishing House).**

## Devotions

Daily devotion is a personal matter of setting aside a time each day to pray, read, and reflect on scripture. A quiet place free from interruption, time for contemplation, and being alone helps one to have quality time with God and to hear what God has to say. As a part of developing one's spiritual disciplines, keeping a journal is a way to keep track of inner thoughts and feelings as a result of prayer, scripture reading, and reflection.

Group devotions are an act of worship in youth ministry and should be well planned. It is best to start with the Bible. One model of group devotions is to read a scripture passage and then ask the youth to reflect

on the following questions:

- How does this passage relate to your life?
- How does this passage relate to our group?
- What are the feelings you have as you listen to this scripture?
- What actions is this scripture leading you to take?

Whether it is through prayer, a praise service, or individual or group devotions, worship is a time of celebration. Worship to enhance and deepen one's relationship to Jesus Christ is not limited to place, content, focus, or number of participants. Praise be to God!

## Connecting in the Congregation

Keeping the youth ministry connected to the life of the congregation is critical because youth ministry is always best experienced in the con-

Season	Time	Colors
Advent	Begins four Sundays before Christmas and continues until Christmas	Purple or Blue
Christmas	Begins Christmas Eve or Day and continues through the Day of Epiphany (January 6)	White and Gold
Season after the Epiphany (Ordinary Time)	Begins the day after the Epiphany and ends the day before Ash Wednesday	Green
Lent	The forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday	Purple
Easter	The fifty days that begin on Easter Sunday and continue through the Day of Pentecost	White and Gold Red for Pentecost
Season after Pentecost (Ordinary Time)	Begins the day after Pentecost and ends the day before the first Sunday of Advent	Green

text of a community of faith that includes children, youth, and adults. Youth ministry that functions outside the rhythm of church life loses a critical connection to the corporate community.

Another reason for connecting to the larger community is that the congregation offers youth an opportunity to share in its outreach opportunities. Within the local family of faith there are abundant opportunities for ministry, support, interaction with other generations, and other ways to intermingle and develop long-term relationships that benefit youth and adults individually and corporately.

Another reason is that we gain a lot from listening to and interacting with our elders. Intentionally spending time with people who once faced the challenges of adolescence is helpful for young people. The adults have chances to impart wisdom, nurture, and grace to searching youth. Our elders have struggled with and endured hard times and difficult dilemmas. Some come through unscathed: others, like Jacob of old, are wounded but blessed. These are part of the faith stories that enrich all of our lives. Too often there is no opportunity for these stories of faith to be shared between children, youth, and adults.

If all of this sounds simple, then why is doing it so difficult? Not all of the fault rests with youth programs or youth leaders. Adults are often afraid of young people! They don't understand the threatening poses and tough outer facades of youth. They find it difficult to interact with teens and harbor deep misperceptions about them. As a result adults put distance and barriers between themselves and youth. Churches have



**Devotion Resources:**

- ***10-Minute Devotions for Youth Groups, 52 Quick Devotions to Involve Teenagers* by J. B. Collingsworth (Group).**
- ***40 More Devotions that Work with Youth* edited by Geraldine Anderson (The Joint Board of Christian Education, Melbourne, Australia).**
- ***Quick & Easy Devotions for Youth Groups* edited by Michael Warden (Group).**

their fair share of these wary adults. They search for and identify special people, youth workers who aren't afraid to be with youth or to manage intimidating teens. With the best of intentions adults want the kids to be introduced to and learn about Jesus Christ, but a subtle, unwitting encouragement can exist to separate youth from the congregation. This unintentional bias must be faced and overcome.

There is no need to fear youth. Media presentations of young people as profane and degenerate makes this difficult to believe. We must do everything we can to overcome these barriers. Youth need ways to demonstrate to our congregations that they can be vital, dynamic members of the congregation—the body of Christ, the family of God. Youth can become mentors to the younger children in the church. Youth can be mentored by the adults in the church. This brings congregational life into a continuous circle.



**The Upper Room publishes a bi-monthly devotional magazine for youth called *Devo'Zine*.**

**Two other resources also from The Upper Room are *With Heart and Mind and Soul, A Guide to Prayer for College Students and Young Adults* by Helen R. Neinast and Thomas C. Ettinger and *Journaling, A Spirit Journey* by Anne Broyles. For more information about devotional resources, call the Upper Room at (615) 340-7270; 1908 Grand Avenue, Nashville, TN 37202.**

### ***Working Toward Wholeness***

Here are some ways to connect youth with others in the congregation:

#### **Youth-Led Worship Services**

When youth step up to do the worship service, there may be a fair amount of anxiety on the part of everyone in attendance. Some adults may fear they'll lose their traditional worship to lots of unusual and wild off-beat liturgies and songs. Others in the congregation may be very open to creative and different forms of worship and welcome any change as a symbol of God's vastness. Youth should carefully assess the dynamics of the congregation before planning and leading worship. Help the youth answer the question "Is the worship service for the leaders or for the participants?" If it's for the leaders, they'll be comfortable doing things in ways that are meaningful for them. If they decide it's the other way around, they'll focus more on what is meaningful worship for participants. If they decide that both participants and leaders should benefit, they'll seek a middle ground.

Consider which gifts your youth can offer to a worship experience. Let the youth singers sing, let the players of instruments play, the friendly greet, the winsome usher, and so forth. Allow youth to use their abilities and talents in any way that might be helpful.

#### **Assisting in Worship**

If the resources, numbers, or experience necessary to pull off the entire worship service aren't available, consider an apprentice approach. For example, let them help collect the offering, lead the Apostles Creed, or share a prayer—all as often as possible. These high-visibility roles allow the congregation to see active and involved youth sharing in the responsibility of worship.

#### **Get-Well Cards**

Greeting cards can be a wonderfully effective form of outreach. Many churches maintain a board where the names of individuals in the hospital are posted. Other churches may list the names in the weekly bulletin under "Prayer and Care" concerns. Staple two pieces of poster board together, draw a picture on the front and a get-well note inside, maybe an appropriate scripture and a get-well wish. Have the youth sign it and add a brief message of good cheer or whatever is appropriate. If you are near the hospitals which are used by members of your congregation, deliver the cards as an occasional outreach experience. The cards serve not only as an expression of good will but of spiritual concern and faithfulness as well.

**Holiday Specials**

You might be able to identify families who could use a little extra support with Thanksgiving or Christmas. Consider letting your county social service agency help you; they usually keep a list of families with legitimate needs. If the youth will adopt a family (or two or three) and then ask the congregation to help, it's surprising to discover the congregation can be very generous. Many times what makes an experience like this difficult is getting it started.

Once the activity is moving, donations are much more easily generated. Placing boxes at the entrances of the church invites people to be very supportive. This is an opportunity for the congregation to participate in a youth-initiated ministry for the entire church family.

**Spring Flowers**

One tray of petunias from a local discount store usually costs less than ten dollars. There might be up to one hundred plants in one tray! Ask your church families, well in advance, for donations of plastic flower pots and purchase a bag of potting soil. Invite youth to wash the pots, and, using the new dirt, replant a single flower into each. On wooden tongue depressors write spring greetings or scriptures and stick one into each pot. Deliver these live spring greetings to various people in your church family. It's a great way to connect with persons limited in their ability to leave home, letting them know they are cared for and remembered.

**A Cleaning Day**

This can be a hard sell to youth. If there is a particular closet or classroom in the church, one that collects

junk and leftover stuff people weren't bold enough to throw away, clean it up! Getting a section like this cleaned out is a great project.

**Bulletin Boards**

Many times churches have bulletin boards that are left blank or have displays that are years old. Consider having a contest one night with small groups of youth trying to design the best board based on a theme. This is especially effective if you have some teens with artistic ability.

Be careful to do some investigation on protocol in this matter. See if there are established procedures or other permissions that should be gained before things are ripped down or stapled up. A little homework with the pastor or the secretary of the church will eliminate potential problems.

**Provide Services to the Congregation**

You might offer a Saturday babysitting service near Christmas where parents can drop off the younger kids and go do their Christmas shopping. This can be a fund raiser or this can be done as a gift.

**Trick-or-Treat Party**

Sponsor an alternative to going door to door on Halloween with a party for the youngest children of your church. Going trick-or-treating has become more and more a high-risk activity in the general population. Set up booths with simple games all kids can play and always win. An entrance fee for each child might be a bag of individually wrapped candies. As these bags come in the front door, they can be quickly hustled around to the back door and distributed evenly at the



**Other forms can be created and masters kept on file such as: Thinking of You cards. These simple cards are mostly blank and have the church's return address on one side. Encourage teens to write a quick note to someone for whatever reason and SIGN THEIR NAME. The cards can then be mailed the next day from the church office, or by the individuals who wrote them. For addressing help, ask them to fill out as much of an address as possible. These prayer and care cards are a wonderful ministry. Meeting/Event notice postcards, Thinking of You postcards, and postcards with the UMYF logo are available through Cokesbury.**

game stations. Each time children play an activity or game, they are given a piece of candy for their trick-or-treat bag.

Try a cake walk, face painting, throwing wet sponges at the preacher, bobbing for apples, popping balloons, and more. Actually, a party can be done at any time. It's a way for the younger kids to look forward to being a part of the youth group when they're older.

### **Quick mission events**

Quick mission events such as window washing or leaf raking can be easily arranged and implemented. In this category we also include Christmas caroling and other activities where you drop in and surprise people for a few moments. Offer them the gift of a song, a smile, a window or yard cleaning, and then move on quickly. When you do these kinds of missions, it's nice to be unnoticed and intentionally unthanked.

However, in this day and age, many elderly become quite distressed and nervous when hordes suddenly rush into their home or yard. Try handing out a pre-printed card or some other representation that clearly states they've been the recipient of a "free" kindness by the youth of their home church. This allows them to relax and receive the gift in the manner it was offered.

There are limitless possibilities for keeping the youth group connected to the congregation. In doing so, everyone is reminded of the corporate nature of the church. It is important to maintain an important balance with young people that models life together as well as life apart.

### ***Committees and Boards***

Other arenas youth can and should be encouraged to participate in are committees and boards in the local church. While many churches faithfully name youth to these groups, unfortunately that is about as far as the effort goes. There are a few reasons why simply naming the youth members to committees doesn't insure youth participation.

- The primary struggle isn't providing for youth members on committees but planning for youth attendance. Most meetings happen at times that are convenient for adults, not necessarily for the youth. Meetings happen at the same time as band rehearsal, football practice, or play practice. The net result is kids just can't get there. If meetings aren't at night, they're during school in the afternoons. There are other kinds of blocks that make

youth attendance difficult. Unless a committee is seriously taking youth participation into account and working hard to accommodate them, the youth are simply relegated to the edges. The end result is youth often don't attend, don't represent, and drop out. What is forfeited is the vital connection youth could have with the larger church; good interplay and potential dialogue is lost. To overcome this traditional pattern of non-attendance, boards and committees must be constantly reminded to meet at times that are conducive to everyone, including the youth. Sometimes this is a near impossibility, but other times, with a little bit of creativity, everyone wins.

- Deciding which youth are nominated and placed on boards and committees is worthy of careful and prayerful thought. Select youth who will speak out and who are capable of comfortably interacting with adults. Nominate youth who, when called upon to answer questions and offer opinions, can respond. Not even every adult can meet this expectation. Struggle, nonetheless, to place the candidates with the greatest potential and ability into leadership.
- Probably the most critical thing any of us can do is to meet with youth members immediately before a meeting. Take time to help them understand the agenda and where



**Few activities must always be done with the whole group. In fact, many ideas of outreach and involvement can be done more effectively with smaller groupings or even one on one. Are there kindnesses you can do, in the name of Christ and to the glory of God, on your own? Think back through things you've been a part of that worked well and consider ways of doing something similar on a more regular basis.**

any hot spots are. Make sure they understand and are able to articulate any concerns coming from the youth program department. The point is to equip them, coach them, work with them, and reinforce that they have a role and a reason for being there. At all youth gatherings, encourage youth members of committees to report on anything that happened and what they learned. Coach them through the reporting experience as well.

Without the careful selection and coaching of youth members and consistent reminders to meeting planners of youth schedules, difficult hurdles can exist in this area. However, some careful attention to the above areas greatly helps the kids' effectiveness and hence their own self-confidence.

Youth want to be involved in the whole life of the congregation. Youth ministry must be in the context of the whole congregation—children, youth, and adults who are growing together in a life of faithful discipleship.

## **Serving Others**

God calls us to serve. Jesus said "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35b). Serving others is a challenge because it has to be out of a sense of unconditional love and desire to help. To be authentic, service to others must be a lifestyle, an attitude. Service takes place in the community of God's world. It takes place where the needs are, where God's people are hurting.

Service must be incorporated into the vision of youth ministry. It must be integrated as a philosophy, a theology of youth ministry. One day, one week's worth of experiences of serving others cannot be seen as unconnected to the rest of what you do in youth ministry. Connecting it must be intentional. There must be reflection and discussion before, during, and especially after the experience. Serving others needs to be understood as mission, our reason for existing. A way of accomplishing this is "service-learning."

Service-learning is a process which combines the concepts of experiential education with the needs of the community. Service-learning incorporates the ideals of servanthood with those of interactive learning. It develops a person's sense of calling and his or her critical thinking and reflection skills. Working hard all day and then spending time in discussion and reflection on the impact of the day's work is service-learning. Schools and other youth-serving agencies are making a greater impact with the ideals of service-learning. It is unfortunate that the church is not leading the way, but it is not too late.

Service-learning can have a significant impact on the Christian education that your church offers youth. Not only can it fill lessons with wonderful content for critical reflection, but it can also offer a whole spectrum of settings in which to do so. Teachers or leaders are no longer the only persons responsible for the content of curriculum. Everyone creates the curriculum through her or his experiences and insights. Service-learning provides new ways of measuring the success of teaching. The goal of Christian education becomes incorporation of ideas and values into one's life, rather than memorizing scripture or theological concepts. Everyone becomes the teacher by sharing and explaining his or her faith, examining motives and attitudes, and living out faith in the world where it really matters.

### ***Why Serve?***

Serving others accomplishes two purposes: meeting needs and learning to live the life of a servant. Serving is not a scheme for alleviating guilt but is a gateway for developing a lifestyle of servanthood. Some of the by-products of service are: a heightened sense of relationship with the church and its biblical witness, moral and ethical decision-making, development of life skills, and a lifetime commitment to social justice issues. Service is powerfully related to systems thinking: it creates community, provides a shared task and purpose, instills learning as an organization or group, utilizes collaboration and interdependence, and empowers youth.

There are many benefits to be derived from being involved in ser-



vice. Serving others develops strong caring and relational skills. Meeting others, conversing with them, and hearing their stories are all part of service. Structure, positive role models, and healthy life-affirming values are all benefits of service to others. Life skills like carpentry, lawn care, roofing, and grocery shopping can be learned and practiced. These and other skills, such as reliability and getting along with others, help develop a foundation for future employment and adult responsibilities. Serving in the community provides youth with a lifelong sense of purpose and worth. Self-esteem can be strengthened by involvement, and seeing that our contributions count. Serving others also affords youth the chance to meet and form relationships with adults who become role models and mentors.

How does your youth ministry go about integrating service-learning into its plan of action or its theology? Service-learning can have many roles, depending on skills and equipment, commitment to the cause, the ages and abilities of your youth, and reasons for wanting to do it in the first place.

It is important to clarify here that you cannot limit yourselves to one view or one way of serving. Every youth is different. Individual skills can be matched to individual tasks. Home repairs are great for some youth, while taking care of someone's physical needs is more comfortable for others. Lawn care is fun to some youth, while making personal visits to persons who are homebound is fun to another. Shopping for groceries might appeal to some, while witnessing on the street corner might really be inviting to others.



### Resources for Service-Learning:

■ ***Beyond Leaf Raking: Learning to Serve/Serving to Learn* by Peter L.**

**Benson and Eugene L. Roehlkepartain (Abingdon).**

■ ***The All-purpose Youth Service Kit, Youth Serving with Jesus* by Ron Robinson (Cokesbury).**

■ ***Servant Journal* by Ron Robinson (Cokesbury).**

Service-learning fits into most any congregation's sense of mission and ministry. We have a biblical mandate. Jesus told us to do it.

There are many questions to ask and answer as you consider making service to others a priority. What do you think serving others will teach you? What does the church have to say about serving others? How is your congregation currently addressing the call of God to serve in the community? Are youth in your church ready for service-learning? If we decide to do this, where can we or will we serve? Will our goal be only to meet critical human needs? Or will we become involved in attempting to change systems which oppress people who are vulnerable or needy? Will we strive to understand the people in need, or just provide short-term, band-aid type assistance?

It is important to realize up-front that getting personally involved with meeting needs frequently produces more profound concern for others. More profound concern for others leads to getting involved with *the system*. Getting involved with *the system* moves you out of the realm of service into the realm of justice. Once you are truly committed to working for justice, it is difficult to turn your back

on service to others. To become committed, youth need to be directly involved rather than philosophically interested in service. Direct involvement in service and justice encourages youth to make a lifelong commitment to responsible Christianity that is lived out in the world.

Involvement with service to others often influences career and vocation choices youth make. Working as a volunteer at the zoo helped one young man discover his call to veterinary medicine. Getting involved with home repair ministries through youth summer mission trips has led many young adults to get involved in the system, helping make better housing for persons all across the economic spectrum. Volunteering at a hospital instilled in one young woman the desire to work in hospital administration. Spending several summers at a camp for children and youth with disabilities encouraged seven youth from one church to commit to vocations as physical therapists, medical technicians, and physicians.

### ***Keys to Success***

There are all kinds of guidelines for integrating service-learning into youth ministry, and keys to making it successful. Serving poorly is something you never want to do. It has long-lasting effects on both the giver and the receiver. Get involved with ongoing, productive, measurable projects which are needed and not contrived. Working for the sake of working is not meaningful for anyone. Training for the job must be provided. Participants need to feel competent and prepared before they arrive at the work site. This not only helps the worker's confidence level, but makes the receiver more comfortable, too.

Make sure everyone understands not only the jobs to be accomplished, but the content you hope to teach, too. The persons being served must always be the ones who define what they need. The persons doing the serving must understand that they can learn much from those they serve and strive to make that learning a goal. Always find ways to structure within these projects time for critical reflection and conversation about the impact of serving.

Serving others needs to be both local and global, and each has its purpose. You don't have to travel halfway across the country to serve. Needs are present right around your church's neighborhood. Local projects can receive more long-term support, and relationships with those served can be sustained. Reflection on the experience can go on for months, as you are continually involved in service. Local ministries can pull persons out of their own world of comfort, reminding them that the needy are "in their front yard." Local projects can be repeated, and folks can bring their friends and share or give the experience to others.

There are risks to serving in your community. It can be difficult to create energy and excitement about serving in your neighborhood rather than in Haiti. Service close to home allows for varying levels of commitment. It is easier to give an hour here and an hour there and never connect it with faith. Folks have a choice about showing up for work. Individual local involvement can be casual or intense, and local service runs the risk of being put aside or postponed. This possibility must always be kept in mind.

Even though needs surround your church, and local mission is an everyday opportunity, service to others away from home is important. Removing oneself from familiar territory can be a powerful experience of solidarity with the persons served. Understanding a different lifestyle or perspective can help us identify with others. Relating to poverty in urban and rural settings gives us a better idea of the global reality of need. Mission trips away from home allow participants to focus on serving without the distractions available at home. They also provide opportunity for reflection while the actual serving is taking place. Intense experiences of serving provide growth in community and mutuality for many youth ministries. Sleeping on floors can do wonderful things for one's spirituality.

There are risks involved in long-distance service. Trips beyond the community require time that many youth and adults cannot commit. Planning trips long-distance can be difficult, unless you cooperate with an existing program, which often means more expense. Raising funds can become consuming, but don't let it get more attention than training or preparation. Without giving time to creative dialogue and reflection with all youth, trips can create tension between those who went and those who did not. Emphasizing only trips away from home can create the mistaken idea that real needs are only in other communities.

There are many ways to design service opportunities, both one-day local projects and week-long or longer events. Locally, you can volunteer as part of an organization's existing system. You can cooperate with other church youth or agencies

to develop a joint effort. You can model your work after something that has already been tried and proven effective. You can even create your very own, unique vision of service and put it into action.

There are several issues to consider as you are choosing to be involved with existing organizations. Study the agency and know its values and goals. Make sure its values and goals match those of your denomination and your congregation. If either party is uncomfortable with the other, a relationship should not be formed. Assure the agency that any unusual expense incurred due to your involvement will be covered by your ministry. Insist that the work you are asked to do is not just "busy work." Expect that the work will be challenging and educational, and make sure the agency understands why.

Long distance service opportunities exist in abundance. Many organizations have been in the business of serving others for years. Some of the better publicized agencies rely on the word of mouth of those who have served with them. Check with other youth ministers who have done mission trips out of the community. Ask them to critique the organizations with which they have worked. Ask them for candid reflections about positives and negatives. Be aware of the costs involved with these projects. Registration fees, room and board fees, donations of dollars and supplies, and transportation costs add up quickly. Consider the values and goals of individual organizations, and be aware of the reflection they provide as part of the program you pay for.



**What are some songs that have meaning for your church's youth? How can youth use those songs and other forms of musical expression more effectively and meaningfully? Get together with some friends and bat that around for a while. You'll be surprised at all the ideas you generate!**

Finally, remember to consider and discuss the real reasons why you want to serve others. Serving is a way of understanding Christ and Christ's mission on earth. Serving is a way of connecting faith with life. Serving is a lifestyle choice, not a one-time enterprise. Don't serve to alleviate guilt or feel better about yourself. Don't serve to be appreciated or applauded. Serve because Christ served others. Serve because it is the right thing to do. Serve because you want to live your faith and not just talk about it.

### **Don't Forget the Music**

What does music have to do with youth ministry? Everything. Music is integrated into both secular and Christian culture and for good reason. Music is very reflective of a given time period, decade, generation, or culture. To avoid being "out of the loop," adult youth workers should try to keep up with trends and interests of youth. Music can be an act of celebration, goofiness, prayer, meditation, community, communion, or mourning. Music can express joy and sadness, grief and relief. Music expresses opinions and ideas, creeds and values. Music can set the stage

for worship or for a party. Music is a tremendous tool.

Don't set music apart as something different from the rest of your youth ministry system. Incorporate music into opening and closing rituals. Create sacred space with it. Use music as a tool, a resource. Use it for fun. Don't limit music to a certain time after snacks and before announcements. Use it as a transition from one idea to another. Setting aside a "music time" may mark it as different from the rest of the youth ministry setting and allow youth who are uninterested in music to blow it off and see music as unimportant.

If you have a youth choir, understand it as an opportunity offered cooperatively by the youth ministry and the music ministry. A choir, band, ensemble, or orchestra can be a point of entry for youth not interested or able to be involved in other settings. Giving youth many opportunities to use their interests and their gifts is a way to be more inclusive. What better way is there to meet needs than by providing an opportunity for youth to share their passion with their congregation and for the glory of God?

Is the guitar really dead? It might be in some youth ministries, but it is a big deal for others. You might be lucky to have some youth or adults who play. Even if you do, guitar doesn't always have to be the primary accompaniment. Try tapes or CDs. Sing a cappella. Play the bongos. How about a kazoo band? Make a joyful noise unto the Lord. The instruments aren't important except as tools for making music an important aspect of youth ministry.

When music is fully integrated into the youth ministry setting, it

becomes part of the whole, like sacred space, worship, Bible study, or community building time. Music expresses so much about who youth are. Faith and life-affirming values are strong themes of music popular with youth. The church often fails to embrace this God-given reality and youth suffer because of it. There are wonderful opportunities for spiritual conversations which come about by listening to music together. Youth who lead devotions often choose songs that express ideas or emotions they feel unable to share otherwise. Discussing songs over lunch or during Sunday school or Bible study can be wonderful ways to incorporate music into youth ministry.

Songs become connected with special moments or memories. They become part of the history created by particular trips or activities. Youth members sometimes create videos or slide shows which integrate memorable songs. Music with special meaning can be chosen for important rituals like saying good-bye to high school seniors or remembering the ministry of a special leader. Sometimes a song is all that is needed to move everyone's collective memory to a special story or an important event. Some songs transcend generations and connect the thoughts of youth and adults in powerful ways.

Music is crucial to any setting inhabited by youth. Music calms youth and energizes them. Youth gather to music and connect with music. Youth express themselves through music and dance. Music's impact is individual and corporate, unique and collective, singular and essential. Don't underestimate the power of music in the life of your



#### **Great music resources:**

- ***Youth! Praise, Praise, Worship, and Fellowship Songs* (Cokesbury).**  
**Available on cassette and compact disk.**
- ***Youth! Praise 2, Calling and Commitment Songs* (Cokesbury).** Available on cassette and compact disk.
- ***Youth! Praise 3, Jesus Is the Rock* (Cokesbury).** Available on cassette and CD with graphics.
- ***Youth! Praise Songbook* (Cokesbury) Singers edition, Leader/Accompanist Guide, Singalong Transparencies.**

youth ministry. Use it to your advantage and for your nourishment. Sing it, play it, dance it, feel it, live it, breathe it. At all times celebrate the presence of God with the gift, the moment, the beauty of music.

## **Getting Outside**

One of the noteworthy traits of the Hebrew scriptures is their holistic view of the world. Everything in it, of it, around it, about it is of God. No distinction is made between sacred and secular.

Youth ministry is ideally situated to take advantage of this theology that sees the whole world as God's handiwork and God's sanctuary. All that limits us from exploring is our own creativity or lack of it. Taking youth out, away from the church, taking advantage of the forests, the parks, the mountains, the beaches, the lakes, all of the scenic beauty, wonder and power that is the out-of-

doors is a wonderful way to experience God's gifts to us. Don't overlook opportunities to camp, hike, take day trips, weekend adventures, extended trips into the wilderness, rock climbing, horseback riding, boating, skating, sailing, and star gazing. What better way to consider the star of Bethlehem, the announcement of the birth of Jesus Christ than to lie out under the stars to contemplate what it means for one person to become the symbol of hope, of something so far coming so close.

What better way is there to talk about the cleansing love and forgiveness of God in Christ than to symbolically write our mistakes in the beach sand and then in quiet silence watch the tide erase our writings, leaving behind a smooth shore, spotless and unstained? This is a powerful visual symbol of how God through Christ gives us all new beginnings!

What better way is there to look at the cycle of life and death, renewal and resurrection, than to move into the springtime forest and see the rejuvenation of life in wildflowers and grasses, trees, leaves, and buds, the lengthening of days; baby bunnies, baby birds, and fawns, all getting their land legs and racing ahead into the summer of life?

What better way is there to see the resurrection than to watch a caterpillar spin its cocoon, go through its chrysalis, and emerge as a hatchling: bent, wet, small and crumpled, the heat of the sun drying and bringing strength to those spreading wings? Now, able to carry its new body into a dimension impossible to imagine as a simple caterpillar, the new creature ventures forth.

What better way to talk about how God's love imbues our lives

with wonder and beauty than with a sunset: wonderful colors, created as the dusk light bounces off particles suspended in the rarefied atmosphere. Purples, reds, oranges, and blues provide a dazzling display that both soothes and calms the spirit.

What better way to study the enormity and the complexity of God's creation than by lying on your belly at a park, getting down really close, spreading the blades of grass, watching a one-foot-square area to see the kind of life that goes on in just that spot. Ants, mites, plants, the incredible activity of an ecosystem lives beneath each and every step we take in the out-of-doors. A wonderful awareness is acquired: how in every square foot of this enormous earth, life teems, and God has given us responsibility for it. Have we done well? Could we do better? Do we fully accept and understand the enormity of that responsibility?

Taking advantage of the outdoor possibilities for ministry doesn't mean going far away. Wherever you go, look for the ways in which God is represented to us through the creation, through the wind and the trees, the natural melodies of birds and crickets, and locusts singing their night songs. Whether we take cues from nature or use the out-of-doors to act out common parables and Bible stories, nature provides a fertile field for doing things differently, or for doing the same things with different results, different twists, and different feelings.

It's one thing to sit in a room and talk about the burning bush Moses saw. It's another thing to sit around a fire and watch the flames consume the fuel, the wood, and then to talk about a fire that did not consume.

That presents a more tangible learning, an appreciation of what the presence of God was for Moses. Holiness is not limited to sanctuaries, sitting around tables, standing in pulpits, or viewing stained-glass windows. Those are nice places—they have tradition—but holiness is something we carry in our hearts. This is because God is everywhere, among us and within us.

In everything there is a possibility to see another dimension of God's handiwork. Going outside opens up our awareness that church and religion and especially God aren't confined to the hallowed walls of a building.

## **Going Away**

Taking any kind of trip for any distance with any number of people requires planning and preparation. Whether moving four people across town or moving bus loads across the country, some level of preparation and planning will make things smoother. How do we plan so that the outing is smooth and so our preparation reflects God's intent that all things be done well?

Before determining where we're going, we must ask a prior question: "Why are we going?" This question should be asked with all the seriousness and prayerful consideration we can muster at the very earliest stages of planning. We need to remember "unless the Lord builds the house those who build it labor in vain" (Psalm 127:1).

This isn't to suggest that an outing to an amusement park is somehow out of bounds. Spending a day away having a good time with peers and adult volunteers is perfectly legit-



**Are there some places, locations, sites in your area that might lend themselves well to some ministry purpose?**

**The county jail would be great place to talk about the apostle Paul being in prison. Parks, fields, roof-tops, and virtually anywhere can be thoughtfully blended into a way of teaching or highlighting faith stories.**

imate. This is even more true if everyone involved understands how this trip fits into a larger scheme of outings throughout the year. Some mission activity—balanced with study, reflection, recreation—works to the glory and good of God's kingdom. Emphasis in one area to the exclusion of others creates imbalance. Always begin by asking the question "why."

Once the question of "why" is satisfactorily answered, it is time to begin planning.

Specific areas need to be addressed.

### **1. Who would go**

Age, number, ratio of youth to adults, those who have a natural interest and or ability.

### **2. Vehicles**

Size, type, seats available, drivers, fuel costs, insurance, road worthiness.

### **3. Lodging**

Where to sleep on the road, during the event; what type of housing is best; are there a sufficient number of adults to assist?

### **4. Food**

At the event, en route to and from the event.

### 5. Costs

How to charge fees, budgeting, self-supporting, fund-raising.

If all this appears a bit intimidating, that's because initially there's a lot of information that needs to be sorted out. Let's look briefly at each piece.

#### ***Who Is This Trip For?***

Targeting your audience is the first thing. Is this a senior-high trip only, a mid-high trip only, or for everyone who can get into a seat? Estimate realistically, by name if possible, the youth who might attend. Then find out if there is enough adult support to make it work. When those numbers are tallied, is the trip still feasible? This is important because none of the other areas below can be dealt with until some sense of participation, including a good guess of how many females and males, is firmly stated. This is a good time to bring in other people to test various ideas and discover what destinations, dates, and times are workable for the target population of the youth group.

#### ***Vehicles***

Traveling in a car is usually the cheapest way to go, certainly the easiest to plan. Cars get excellent gas mileage; because most people have one, you don't have to rent; and they are versatile. Cars go on any kind of road, park just about any place, and don't take unusual skills to operate.

If your numbers are too large to fit into a car, consider several cars. Still not enough seats? Then it's time to move to the next size up: a van. Now a van presents some different issues. Where will you put the luggage? Do you need a trailer? Do you

have a hitch? Can you safely maneuver a van with a trailer? (Everybody can go forward — can the driver go backward?) Fuel is another issue; does it use special fuel? Do you know how to check the oil, change a fan belt? Where's the battery?

If your church doesn't own a van, you may have to rent one. Are there persons in your congregation with a van who would be willing to go along? These are all things to be considered.

If you have a larger group, look at several vans or a bus. You may have to rent a bus which can be a pricey venture. Buses can cost up to \$2.50 a mile plus the driver's expenses, both lodging and food.

In renting a vehicle, divide the total cost evenly among the participants. Buses sound expensive, but when forty people share the cost, it isn't too bad. A one-thousand mile trip at two dollars a mile computes to two thousand dollars. However, divide two thousand dollars by forty people riding and it comes to about fifty dollars per person. Sure, fifty dollars is a good bit of money, but if a single rider in a car were to travel one thousand miles for that amount, it would be a wonderful deal. In a bus, there is the added benefit that everyone can safely travel together, talk, and relax while a professional driver is at the wheel.

If vans were used instead of a bus, the trip could be slower; there may be difficulty finding enough adult drivers; the drivers would be more tired; there would be less interaction; so, when compared to fifty dollars a head for a bus, the bus doesn't sound like a bad deal. With a bus there aren't the headaches of maintenance or worries about break-



downs. All those concerns are taken care of by the bus company.

The key with transportation is to examine all options and try not to let the bottom-line figure scare you. Divide the total cost evenly among the participants. Determine how much of the expense may be raised through fund raisers, examine your whole budget, find a sponsor. It's surprising at times to discover that initial fears about big dollar costs can be overcome with creativity and persistence.

### ***Lodging***

Anytime a trip continues into the night, you need to give some thought to exactly how sleeping arrangements will be handled.

Setting up tents in the dark is not fun, nor all that easy, if the youth are unfamiliar with camping. Hotels can be expensive. Churches are not bad options except that arriving at 2:00 in the morning and expecting someone to meet you to unlock the facility can be a bit audacious. Schools in summer time or colleges and universities between quarters may have empty dorm space or classrooms. Bigger institutions often have security personnel who can unlock buildings and answer questions. The price is usually less than even inexpensive motels; however, a lack of linens, and sometimes even lightbulbs can make the money saved not worth it.

In a situation where the group is arriving late and intends to leave early, there is no sense paying for extra motel amenities like a fancy swimming pool, hot tubs, or even a nice restaurant. All these things will be closed and shut down before arrival and not open until after

departure. Instead, find the budget motel in a safe part of town, get a great sleep, arise, and head on down the road.

In a situation where the group is going to arrive at a location early or stay later in the morning of the next day, you'll want as many healthy diversions for the youth as possible. Items such as pools, spas, and coffee shops keep the youth from going stir crazy; and of course, if they're stir crazy, you'll soon be driven crazy.

### ***Handling Food***

Handling food while traveling doesn't have to be a headache. There are a number of ways to do this that relieve the stress. One way is to expect all the youth to bring extra money for their own meals, and whenever a food stop is made they are responsible for getting off the vehicles, going and purchasing their meal, eating it in a timely manner, cleaning up, and getting back on the vehicle.

If you have uncertainty of their ability to budget and eat properly, there is an alternative. Collect all of the money ahead of time, convert the cash into smaller bills and stash appropriate amounts into small envelopes. Then, at each food stop, hand them an envelope. This prevents overspending at any point in time and assures they'll always have food money throughout a trip regardless of individual spending habits. The downside to this method is one person usually has the headache of making sure the envelopes aren't lost or stolen.

Still another method is to collect all of the food money ahead of time, buy groceries, and prepare meals for

the group at appropriate meal stops. If the group is camping in tents, a blending of all three of these suggestions might work best. There are times when the kids will want to buy their own food; times when handing them money for special meals such as a fancy supper is called for; and then, when everyone is in camp, providing groceries is the best plan.

Don't underestimate the kids' ability to handle and budget their money. If they know ahead of time exactly the number of meals they'll have to account for and how much should be put aside for each meal, most times things work out wonderfully. In allowing youth to learn budgeting and handling of meals, they learn a lot and a major headache for the leader is avoided.

When you're purchasing groceries, be aware of special dietary needs and limitations: some youth may be diabetics or vegetarians; some may have allergies or be on a diet; all have preferences. Be sure you're not left holding a bag of super high protein seven-grain thin sliced pumpernickel made with cheeseloaf spread (which will only be eaten by the two adults who happen to be on a diet).

### **Cost**

The budget of an event like this needs to be thought through very carefully. What are the real costs versus the fanciful hopes? The real costs begin with materials that you'll need in order to make the journey safe. Do you have maps, do you have guide books and other kinds of things that will help you make good decisions along the way? You should have meals at planning times even

before the trip takes place. There are necessary supplies, like that extra dining fly for supper in the rain, propane tanks for the stove, and paper plates. What utensils will you need? Can they be borrowed or do they need to be purchased? These are all little expenses which can add up in a hurry.

Give special planning attention to motels, tips, and taxes. Motel taxes run sometimes as high as 17 and 18 percent. When a reservationist quotes a room for forty dollars, they mean forty dollars before the tax. What you thought were five rooms for forty dollars each, which is two hundred dollars, ends up being a tab of two hundred and seventy-two dollars. The additional expense can change the bottom line in radical ways. If there's a phone charge for each time someone dials out from the room, have all the phones turned off and tell the kids they can make their calls at the pay phones located in the lobbies. Otherwise the event budget can be blown! Some motels have X-rated and R-rated movies in the rooms. These can be restricted and cut off at the registration desk by instructions at check-in.

If an adult is willing to go on a trip with the youth, his or her expenses should be provided. This can be an hefty disbursement, so make this offer carefully, but at least try. An alternative is to have the adults pay for their own road food and the church cover the cost of the event itself. Do what is reasonable—after all, a person willing to spend his or her leisure time with other people's teenagers on a volunteer basis deserves a break.

Program materials aren't cheap either. Whether it be an extra soccer

ball or booklets, these kinds of things need to be taken care of ahead of time and can cost money. Entrance fees to parks, campgrounds, tickets to see the largest moss house ever grown in the dark—all need to be rolled into the bottom-line cost. Figure the whole package out ahead of time so the youth aren't caught off guard during the trip by having to pay as they go unless this is the method established ahead of time.

Don't overlook the cost of trip insurance through your church or through the annual conference. It's not expensive; it just has to be taken care of ahead of time.

Some costs can be saved by borrowing and begging with promises to return everything in as good shape as you received it. Of course even that doesn't always go well—like a pair of borrowed skis that are stolen, or a ski pole that is broken—and all of this needs to be replaced.

Then you'll need a contingency fund. What does a wrecker cost when your van is broken down on the road? Wrecker drivers aren't enthusiastic about taking credit cards or checks — cash is the universal language. Carry enough cash to get you out of an average jam. Other more serious emergencies can be put on various credit cards and settled later.

Now tally all the amounts. Look over the fine print in contracts and forms, make sure every question has been asked and all special situations have a response in place. The total cost of the trip can be divided evenly among the youth, backed by a trip budget, raised totally by the youth through various activities, or some combination of the three. However it's done, think through the whole

plan carefully before you go too far in planning or signing contracts.

## **Advancing Through Retreats**

Riding to a retreat site with a youth group for which I was to be the guest speaker, I took particular interest in the comments of the kids I was traveling with. Some were looking forward to quiet time, others to the outdoor activities, some were gearing up for some traditional pranks. I thought to myself, either these kids are very well informed as to what is going to happen on this weekend or just the opposite: no one has a clue as to what the focus for the event is. As it turned out, the kids were indeed well informed and in fact had quite a hand in planning what the weekend was about.

Retreats, while popular for many reasons, continue to be one of the best ways to build Christian community. Regardless of the focus or theme, one of the wonderful, serendipitous benefits is how well trust and closeness develop between participants. Few activities allow for this vibrant dynamic quite as wonderfully as getting away from it all.

What goes through people's minds when they hear the word *retreat*? Some think of cities, working in soup kitchens amid skyscrapers, restaurants, parks, and museums. Others think of being miles from the nearest temptation of any kind—stores, malls, other groups, arcades, or all-night restaurants. Many imagine something that falls in between those two extremes. Regardless of personal preferences, there are certain components that go into any good retreat plan. Naming a steering



### **Retreat and Trip Planning Resources:**

■ **Road Trip by Michael L. Selleck**  
(Youth Specialties).

■ **UMY Mission and Event Annual (Cokesbury).**

**Three volumes are available.**

team of youth and adults who will plan and implement the event is essential. This is very important for at least one reason: allowing others to help helps you!

### ***Purpose and Goals***

A strategic aspect of any retreat is planning ahead. This rightfully begins with the question, "Why a retreat? Will it help us reach our target and move toward our vision? Will it move our youth in the direction we need to go? Is a retreat the best way to accomplish our goals at this time?" Don't assume everyone on the youth ministry team has the same mental image of what a retreat means. This step, while simple, gets everyone on the same page: "We're going to retreat for the expressed purpose of . . ." Merely filling in that blank aligns everyone in a common direction and prevents later misunderstandings or working at cross purposes. Once the reason for retreating, the target audience, and the goals are clear, it's time to begin sorting through the various logistical components.

### ***Promotion***

Just because a retreat is planned doesn't guarantee teens will beat down the doors to attend. Teens and volunteers are busy these days and

calendars must be carefully kept. Without giving enough advance warning of the retreat dates, a good deal of planning could be for naught. The rule of thumb is: *one month of promotion is necessary for each day of an event.* If a three-day retreat is coming up, your promotion, complete with all the details of cost, theme, speaker, programs, etc., needs to be ironed out and promoted three months before the actual event at a minimum! If promotion is put on a shorter time line than this, conflicts for the date will come into play for both youth and adult volunteers. Chances for households to put aside the necessary money to send a teen or two is also seriously cramped, much to their displeasure. This means added difficulty as people try to guess what school of administration you didn't graduate from. Please note, the "one month for each day of an event" rule only applies to promotion. The actual planning of dates, securing location, signing up speakers and music, etc., is ideally done a year ahead.

### ***Sites and Locations***

There are only two basic considerations in this area: high or low population. Locations for retreats run the gamut. On one extreme there is the crowded beach blasts that cater to thousands of people all squeezed into a very small area. The other is the isolated mountain lodge that requires traveling five miles of dirt road and only hosts one group at a time. Both have their place, and wonderful things can happen in either setting. Which place is best depends on ministry goals, overall vision, and for whom and why the

event is happening at all.

If separating your group from the stress and pressure of a normal life is the order of the day, so be it. Isolating your teens and working on trust levels, handling more indepth material is easier to do in a quiet spot where solitude is built in.

If, on the other hand, integrating your kids with the steady hum of lights, other people, nightlife, attractions, and distractions is exactly what you have in mind, opportunities abound. Exposing them to other youth, expanding their horizons, mixing them up with an exciting change of pace is a commendable aim. One thing is clear: don't get crossed up by mixing the right agenda with the wrong location or vice versa. Make sure the site and the goals work together.

Other site concerns that must be addressed are capacity of the facility, sleeping arrangements, meeting rooms, and adequate recreation facilities. How will meals be handled and where will meals be eaten? What are the fees associated with a site and are there hidden costs for what can be regarded by some as "extras?" Will an evening fire be desired? permissible? Also check carefully about rules and expectations the management of a site might have that could affect your plans and goals.

### ***Planning Considerations***

Planning your own retreat means addressing several issues:

- 1. Schedule**
- 2. Leaders**
- 3. Worship**
- 4. Snacks**
- 5. Recreation**
- 6. Meals**



**What kind of promotion works best in your youth ministry? Bulletin boards? Fliers? Phone calls? Announcements? Mail outs? Sign-up sheets? Some combination of these? What can you do to help spread the word for upcoming events? Don't wait for someone to ask. Come up with an idea, a plan, and a way you can accomplish the plan. Then approach your leaders with the idea and see how it fits with the stated goals and vision of the ministry. Chances are they will love the extra help and you will get the word out to more and more people.**

#### **1. Schedule**

Tackle the schedule as soon as the theme is set. In what exact order will the retreat unfold and in what time frames? There is no limit to what a schedule can look like, but following is a fairly typical arrangement.

##### ***Friday night***

- 8:00 Arrive and unpack gear
- 9:00 Gather, discuss rules, clarify agenda, answer questions
- 9:30 First Session: Prayer partners, singing
- 10:30 Whole-group active recreation, movie option, snacks
- 12:00 Evening wind-down via share groups, devotions
- 12:30 Lights out

##### ***Saturday***

- 8:45 Breakfast (remember, sleeping in can be a gift)
- 9:30 Gather, review agenda, answer questions, wake up
- 10:00 Second Session; lead songs
- 10:15 Second Session presentation
- 11:30 Break for lunch

### Afternoon:

Organized free-time options.  
Soccer game, swimming,  
prepare for evening talent  
show.

- 5:00 Supper
- 7:00 Gather, review agenda,  
answer questions, chat.
- 7:30 Third Session: Lead singing
- 7:45 Third Session presentation
- 8:30 Special evening activity:  
Talent show
- 10:00 Snacks and break
- 10:30 Wide game: high energy
- 12:00 Afterglow, devotions, cool  
down

### **Sunday**

Breakfast, not too early.

- 9:30 Gather, review schedules for  
packing up, cleaning up,  
loading vehicles, and other  
questions. Sing
- 10:00 Fourth Session: Lead singing
- 10:15 Fourth Session presentation
- 10:45 Closing worship event
- 11:30 Pack, load, and head home

There's nothing sacred about this structure. Any schedule that works for the stated purposes of the weekend will do. The schedule should be developed by the entire steering team. Once this is done, the next task is dividing up the various parts among the willing workers.

### **2. Leaders**

Once the theme and schedule is clear, the next step is identifying the people who will assume responsibility for the tasks. A critical segment is the presentation on the theme. How is this going to be presented and by whom? Will you have a guest speaker? Guest speakers can provide as little as a few brief talks on a theme, or

they can import the entire weekend: games, activities, talks, music—the works. The more a speaker provides, the more it will cost. The best outside speakers must be contacted months in advance. There are other times when having an outsider might not enhance the goals of the weekend, and it can mean saving bucks to be used either another way or another day. Obviously if an outsider leader isn't brought in, someone on the inside will need to be responsible for the content portions of the weekend.

Other leaders should be identified for the gathering times, the music times, the recreations times, the meal times, etc. Each piece should be thoroughly explained and understood so the planners have as few questions as possible. Don't overlook finding a leader to assume responsibility for the luggage, transportation, equipment, first aid, fire building, etc.

### **3. Worship**

This ingredient shouldn't be relegated to just Sunday morning. The worship component should be woven throughout the event, from establishing prayer partners, to evening devotions and morning watch, to the Sunday closing experience. The most significant worship experiences are ones youth help plan and present. Consider ways they can contribute without putting them in difficulty. For example, having everyone in the group read a three-sentence reflection can easily take the place of a devotion delivered by one person.

### **4. Snacks**

This item can be as simple as providing soft drinks, cups, ice, and store-bought cookies, or as elaborate

as homemade everything with hot cider and the works. While what the snacks are isn't all that critical, having something available is. Teens not only like to eat; they need to eat. Fruit and other healthy items demonstrate stewardship of our bodies and are increasingly popular with teens.

### **5. Recreation**

Leading games isn't something to be taken for granted. It's a skill. Knowing how to hush a crowd, how to clearly explain rules, being flexible enough to modify rules to suit the facility, ground and group, and enough of a detail person to have thought of most contingencies are all necessary. Pick this leader carefully and reward her or him often!

### **6. Meals**

If the retreat site provides meals as part of the package, wonderful. If not, find a person who can organize a few youth, plan a menu, purchase food, pack it, and identify people to help in the preparation, serving, and cleaning up. This is also a bit of a skill area. Just how much spaghetti is necessary to feed thirty-seven people?

This section is by no means exhaustive. This is, after all, just the facts. Several excellent resources that focus entirely on retreats, offering themes and ideas, are on the market. While reading is a primary way to learn and plan, don't overlook an opportunity to volunteer to help another youth program in your area. This is a first-hand education regardless of what happens. If things go poorly, you'll know what to avoid in the future. If things go well, you can study why and build on it.

### **Evaluation**

Evaluation promotes celebration and leads to improvement. Did the retreat hit the target? Was the principle aim met? Did the event connect for the intended audience? There is an old saying that experience is the best teacher. This may not apply. People can make a mistake and then repeat it because they didn't take time to evaluate what was going wrong! Experience isn't the best teacher; evaluation is. Take the time to prepare an appropriate evaluation form before the event begins. Allow some time toward the end of the retreat for everyone to respond, and collect the evaluations for review a few days later. Use evaluations as you plan the next event. Celebrate what went well. Then plan for improvements in the future.

## **Measuring Success**

### ***Measuring by World Standards***

Having a vision for ministry is like a spider's web. At the center is the target, the vision. We are on the webbing. There are three primary directions of movement; toward the center, away from the center, and circling the center. In real life, much of our time is spent achieving a certain degree of success and then circling. Occasionally something happens that becomes a catalyst for movement toward the vision, a step closer to the center. On other occasions we step away and put distance between us and our center. We always want to move toward the target—the vision. What does this have to do



**More Resources for Retreats:**

■ ***Somethin's Cookin,' Easy-To-Do Youth Programs*, by Ann B. Cannon**

**(Abingdon).**

■ ***Is My Nose Growing? And 29 Other Great Youth Programs*, edited by John Gooch**

**(Abingdon).**

■ ***The Complete Youth Group Checkup and Other Great Retreats*, edited by Tom Salsglver**

**(Abingdon).**

with measuring success?

First, success cannot be measured without a defined center, a vision or target toward which you move. An acceptable vision changes as the current reality in your ministry changes. Specific strategies and plans for ministry help move your ministry toward the vision. Does a new idea, purchase, workshop, or event move your ministry toward the vision or away from it? This is a basic question to ask in evaluating your ministry. Remember, circling is acceptable and understood; movement is great as long as the strategies and steps move toward the vision.

This web image also applies to our life with Christ, who is the center. In looking at our lives, our ministries, and our events, we need to be concerned that we're not moving away from the center—that we are moving toward it. Holding patterns of faith happen, but the vision is life lived with Christ at the center.

***Measuring by God's Standards***

Paul writes, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentle-

ness, and self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23). In another letter, Paul adds, "faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Spiritual success is such an elusive and personal quality that any suggestion of measuring it feels vague and inappropriate. Yet what are the basics of a mature life in Christ? Biblically we are called to make disciples (Matthew 28:19). That is an easy thing to say but difficult to measure. People mature at different rates and in different ways. What inspires some, may actually impede others. How is it possible to measure whether we're on the right track or at a dead-end? Are we truly helping youth and adult leaders become disciples or simply promoting an appearance of growing disciples? The whole truth is we can't truly know someone's heart and motivation. What we can do is watch for spiritual gifts blossoming through actions and behaviors.

How are the "fruits of the spirit" promoted by youth and adults in your ministry? Is there movement toward genuine compassion through serving others and caring for others? Is there a genuine attitude of joy and celebration of life? Is there a sense that God is in charge?

Some of the most unkind and harsh behaviors are demonstrated within our own ministries. This is manifested through put-downs, shunning, mocking, and excluding. Self-esteem has been described as the sum total of all the invitations and dis-invitations a person has ever received. Those who feel more directly invited into relationships and activities generally display higher self-esteem. Persons with low self



esteem have often been excluded or uninvited.

In Christian ministry we must always strive, in the name of Christ, to invite! Invite others into conversation, small groups, activities, friendship, confidence, and support. Adult volunteers and youth who are truly growing in discipleship become kind and gentle. In your ministries, is a mood of patience and generosity patterned and nourished? Again, these can't be truly measured, but impatience and greediness will destroy people and communities! How can your ministry help youth and adults grow in patience and generosity?

If all of this appears to be a bit overwhelming and even a little confusing, take comfort in Paul's description of love in 1 Corinthians 13. The true test of discipleship is rooted in, built on, and growing in the love of God through Jesus Christ.

### ***Tools, Evaluations, Follow Up***

Next time someone asks, "How are you doing?" try responding, "Compared to what?" It's a relevant question. If you compare yourself to a person who's sick and feels terrible, you might be doing pretty good, even on an off day. If compared to a millionaire who doesn't have to worry about money for the rest of her life . . . ; well, you get the point. This same question applies to evaluations. "Did you have a good time?" "Compared to what?" This question and the context of the answer are what is at the heart of evaluations and why they are so important to us.

We need to know how an event, meeting, or program was perceived. We also need to be sure that the

responses we get are based on a common frame of reference that is understood by everyone giving feedback. Otherwise, even a simple question can mean getting inaccurate responses.

For example, if, in wanting to know if a certain program engaged the kids and taught them something, you ask the counselors, "How did it go?" there is no telling to what their answers will be in reference. One adult, who treasures promptness and could care less about the speaker, might answer, "Fantastic!" because everything was on schedule. Another adult, who cares less about schedules, considers the program "peaceful" because there weren't any fist fights this time. Another adult who considers the weather as the secret intangible of a fine event, will say, merely because the skies were gray, "The event was a disaster!"

If you took these responses at face value, you could easily determine that the program was fantastic, peaceful, and yet a disaster, none of which truly apply to your original concern of how well the program portion went.

These scenarios oversimplify a subtle and complex issue to make a point. If a carefully and well worded written evaluation is used, the chances of getting accurate, enlightening, and usable information are increased radically. Relying on the old, "So, what did you think?" method is almost always an invitation to misinformation. Evaluations are the tools we must use if we're going to improve our chances to improve. Without them we can only guess at what's really going on in the minds of leaders and participants.

Since as human beings we have a tendency to make the same mistake over and over again, there will always be a need to stop, sit down, evaluate what's going wrong, and chart a new course. Evaluations help people change, grow, and improve ministry settings. These tools must have measurable questions, whether used for individual or corporate purposes.

### ***How to Evaluate***

If there is enough time, and you have the energy, you could go to each individual at an activity and run him or her through a barrage of questions and collect your data. This could take days or weeks, depending on how many persons were present. To capture the best feedback, an evaluation should be taken immediately following an event, meeting, or activity. This is why having written questions on a paper ready to distribute and collect immediately works well. Feelings are fresh, ideas are flowing, and writing responses is less intimidating than oral interrogations done later.

Be specific when evaluating individual meetings, activities, and events. It's not difficult to take a few minutes after a youth council meeting to hand out an evaluation to discover if objectives were met and if processes can be improved.

Included here are some suggestions for creating evaluation tools. Read them carefully. Plan to read evaluations more than one time in order to glean from them all of the rich resources and information they contain. A quick glance immediately following the event usually ends up being a cursory temperature-taking of whether things went well or poorly.

A few days later, sit down again with the same evaluations and start reading each response carefully. Formulate a collective response, noting how the event, activity or meeting helped you move toward the vision for your ministry as well as notes about what needs improving.

### **Around the issue of *TRAVELING*, ask questions that get at concerns such as:**

- How did you feel about the type of vehicles used?
- Were stops for conveniences satisfactory?
- What suggestions do you have to improve . . . ?

### **Around the issue of *FACILITY*, ask questions that get at concerns such as:**

- How did you feel about the sleeping arrangements?
- How did you feel about the location?
- How did you feel about the recreation options available?
- What suggestions would you have for next time to improve the site?
- What suggestions do you have to improve?
- To save money, would you settle for less?
- Would you want to come here again? Why?

### **Around the issue of *FOOD*, ask questions that get at concerns such as:**

- What was your overall impression of the food quality?
- What was your overall impression of the food quantity?
- What snacks should we try next time?
- What suggestions do you have to improve?

Around the issue of **MAJOR PRESENTATIONS**, ask questions that get at concerns such as:

- Did you enjoy the content of the major presentations? Why? Why not?
- Were you able to understand and apply the content to personal life? Why? Why not?
- What related topics would you like to pursue in the weeks ahead?
- How do you plan to follow up on these presentations with other youth and adults in the future?
- What suggestions do you have to improve?
- What ideas can you suggest for next time?

Around the issue of **ACTIVITY**, ask questions that get at concerns such as:

- How was the balance between fun and theme building?
- Did you enjoy the selection of games? Which ones and why?
- Are there suggestions to improve a game you'd like to try again?

Around issues of **GENERAL OBSERVATION**, ask questions such as:

- Were there portions of this event that stood out for you? Why?
- Would you willingly bring a guest next time? Why or why not?
- Do you feel that this event was consistent with the overall vision of our ministry?
- What suggestions do you have for adding things to make this better?
- What suggestions do you have for deleting things to make this better?



**Evaluations can take any shape, be any length, and cover any kind of information. However, the shorter, simpler and more clearly they are laid out, the more feedback you'll receive. The trick is trying to find a balance between assuring maximum feedback and generating sufficient information.**

- Do you know that if you have personal concerns you can discuss them with [me] any time in the next four days?
- Would you be willing to write a statement about the event that might be used in future promotions or reports. If yes, please use a separate piece of paper and sign your name to it.

Other aspects of evaluation include tracking visitors and following up on absentees. Tracking visitors is critical. Training the youth and adults to help with this is the only way to go. Have standard information cards preprinted and always well stocked in a visible area. Regular attendees should know where to find the cards and that it is their task to have them filled out by their guests. The completed cards are then placed in the hands of a person who manages the new information. Ask questions such as name, address, phone, school, grade, friend's name they attend with (if it applies), would they like a followup call, would they like to be put on the mailing list, etc.

Following up with absentees is ideally done face to face. If that isn't practical, a phone call is next on the list. If that doesn't work out, try sending a personal note. Only as a

last resort, send out a stock card or form letter saying "we missed you." While these are listed in order of preference, any of them is better than nothing at all. If more than a

few weeks goes by and there has been no response from the cards, put that person on your special care list and make a followup visit as soon as possible.



## Chapter 7: Money Matters



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### Stewardship Is More than Money

God created everything and it was good. That is what is told to us in the first story of creation, Genesis 1:1–2:4: light, darkness, land, water, sky, trees, plants, vegetables, flowers, birds, mammals, lizards, humans. God created everything. From the beginning, God made it clear that humans are to work hard to keep creation good, to nurture and protect it: “Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them: male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.’” (Genesis 1:26-28).

Some folks make the mistake of understanding phrases like “have dominion over” to mean we are to use creation for our own interests without regard to the rest of creation. We want to think God told us to waste the earth’s resources, to

expend them, to deplete them. What God intended was that humanity would be custodial caregivers, or stewards, of creation. God intended for us to nurture creation, taking from it what we need, but also ensuring that it would survive and last for the life of creation. We are responsible to do our best to keep creation good, to leave it better than we found it.

Stewardship is a mandate from God. That means it is our responsibility for our neighbors in creation. It means taking care of animals and plants, and it means looking out for other people too. Stewardship means working to ensure adequate housing and health care for everyone. It means ensuring that persons take full advantage of their gifts, their abilities, and their talents. Stewardship means assisting persons to use resources in the most effective ways. It means using time to its fullest potential. Stewardship is being responsible with food, not wasting it or playing games with it. Stewardship involves recycling, organ donation, environmental activism, and political involvement. Stewardship can be taken in many directions and to different degrees, depending on the time and attention we are willing to give it.

Because stewardship is so important, and encompasses so much of life, it is a crucial concept to be

taught in youth ministry. Like most concepts of the Christian lifestyle, stewardship is best taught by experience. As folks work through any decision-making process, effective stewardship of time and resources and talent needs to be considered. It might seem really fun to plan food-wasting contests for a game night. What does it model? What message does it teach? What would hungry people think of games that used food for something other than eating?

Planning a talent show which encourages booing or ridiculing persons is not effective stewardship of persons' gifts, talents, or self-esteem. The same is true for activities or events which make persons the focus of practical jokes. What statement would these experiences make about the worth of persons? What kind of behavior would be endorsed? How would Christ's love be exhibited? Every decision a leadership team makes should take these considerations into account.

You can use all the settings of your church's youth ministry to teach and model stewardship. Take opportunities to discuss ways participants in each setting can be responsible for effective and conservative use of resources. Recycling cold drink cans rather than trashing them can be a regular part of your life together. Using "real" plates, glasses, and utensils and washing them can become as much a habit as throwing away paper plates and plastic utensils and cups. Saving and reusing party or bulletin board decorations is an easily maintained practice. Taking care of church facilities like carpet or windows or walls is responsible stewardship. Turning off lights in unused rooms and when leaving is

responsible stewardship.

The way we spend money individually and corporately is a stewardship issue. The things we buy — clothing, accessories, possessions — reflect our sense of stewardship. The things your youth ministry buys — curriculum, resources, Bibles, televisions, stereo systems — reflect your sense of stewardship. Communication is crucial to youth ministry. Personal computers are very helpful in this arena. Purchasing one might be a real priority for your youth ministry. Responsible use and maintenance is essential to good stewardship.

Music is vital to youth ministry. Purchasing tapes or CDs for accompaniment or entertainment might be very important to your church's youth. But owning a very expensive and impressive stereo system might speak to others outside your primary circle of influence of your materialism rather than your spirituality. Stewardship is thinking about these kinds of issues.

It takes money to run a youth ministry. It takes money to be involved in serving others. Most church youth wind up raising money. What is the most responsible way to be stewards of that money? Will you tithe from the receipts to the church's budget? Will you spend all those mission trip funds, even if you have to eat one more meal out in order to do so? Will you use it as "seed money" for the next service opportunity? Will you sponsor fundraisers for "fun" events or only for serving events? You have to make those choices and decisions, but all decisions make statements about your understanding of stewardship.

Deciding to start a recycling program for your church might be a

wonderful idea. It might really make a positive statement about your church's commitment to stewardship. The way such a program is designed or maintained will speak volumes about intentions and responsibility. It would be important to ask logistical questions like: What items will be recycled? Where will they be stored? Who will deliver them to the recycling center? What will be done with the funds raised from the program?

Sponsoring a blood drive or a campaign to encourage people to sign organ donor cards would be an excellent way for youth to get the church involved in responsible stewardship. What kinds of work would need to be done behind the scenes? What will be the intended purpose? How will you teach the value of understanding these opportunities as stewardship?

Time is an essential commodity in our individual lives. Our families, our schools, our extra-curricular opportunities are in constant combat over our time. It is essential that our youth ministry not be an additional participant in the time game. When we plan youth events or activities, we need to take schedule into consideration. We also need to consider what we do with the time we have. Do not have a meeting for the sake of having a meeting. That is poor stewardship. If you have a meeting, make sure you decide something. Make sure participants have the opportunity to spend their time well. If you can't think of a viable reason to have a meeting, cancel it.

Quality use of time is not only a consideration for meetings; it has to do with all kinds of opportunities. Service opportunities which are not planned well are examples of poor



**A good resource to help youth examine stewardship of time, relationships, possessions, and creation is *Choices and Challenges, Stewardship Strategies for Youth* by Dan R. Dick (Discipleship Resources).**

time stewardship. Getting folks together without proper tools or equipment, training or preparation is poor stewardship of time. Individuals will be the judge of effective time use. Programmatically, it is more difficult to measure quality. Some folks will never be satisfied. That doesn't mean you can ever stop being stewards of time. Making effective use of time a priority in your youth ministry says you care. It makes a statement about how important persons are. It is crucial to good planning and good leadership.

God created everything and made everything good. It is our responsibility to care for all of God's creation. It is our mandate to be stewards in every act, every statement, every decision. Holding that mandate and its related responsibility close to our heart brings us closer to understanding God's extreme care for us. It is in the grace of God that we can find wisdom and leadership in our attempts to live as Christ would have us live. We are responsible for all our relatives in creation. Let us embrace the task responsibly and with passion.

## **Budget and Fundraising**

There's a saying which goes, "Every form of refuge has its price." This suggests that no matter where

we might live or work, regardless of what it might look like to others, there's almost always some unpleasant aspect that goes with the territory. For ministry, dealing with money and budgets is the price we must pay. Because the handling of money is seldom a laughing matter, especially sacred money given to the church's ministry, there are some myths concerning money that must be dispelled.

### Myth #1:

#### ***No One Cares that Much***

Money is something people care about. Some church treasurers have a sixth sense about cash flows, how it's handled and how it's spent. Even without knowing all the details, they seem innately aware of when things are being done well and when things are being done poorly. Mixing diverse personality types, those people who scrutinize every financial detail with those who don't have a deep commitment to keeping receipts and tracking the small bills is a recipe for disaster.

To battle the myth that no one cares, extra care must be given to assure that funds are accounted for, receipted, correctly totaled, and otherwise maintained in all circumstances and in all cases.

A significant step forward in the matter of proper handling of money is to use a central treasury where all cash and checks that come in to the youth ministry for any event or activity are deposited into the main church treasury account. This means that all incoming funds are recorded and accounted for and all receipts and expenditures are in order. The

church treasurer accounts for exactly what came in and exactly what went out, what the purpose was, what the amounts were, and what, if any, was left over.

Not all youth workers enjoy supportive relationships with persons who control local church checkbooks. Obviously this whole central treasury notion works wonderfully when the treasurer is supportive and available. On the other hand, if you are dealing with a person who is suspicious, overly cautious, and slow to respond, there is more of a challenge. With an overly controlling treasurer, you might believe that any other form of handling money is more desirable. Just the opposite is true. With this kind of person, the ministry and the leaders are under the greatest kind of scrutiny imaginable. This means the greatest amount of care must be exercised. Use the church's primary bank account for all youth money transactions.

There are other kinds of accounting procedures. Some youth programs have separate checkbooks, or youth workers handle their budgets out of special credit cards. The best "checks and balances" system is to work with the church's treasury. In this way, most questions that might arise are well on their way to being answered before they're even asked.

### Myth #2:

#### ***Big Budget Means Successful Programs***

There are youth ministries with budgets that exceed forty thousand dollars in a calendar year, and they have precious little to show for it. There are, on the other hand, youth



ministries with almost no budget that are offering amazing ministries. Tying the success of a youth ministry directly to the size of the budget is a common myth. Surely it is nice to have both a creative and wonderful ministry and a large budget. Yet it is a mistake to assume they have to go hand in hand.

To combat this myth, your focus must begin with solutions to problems and needs instead of how much money you do or don't have. Identify ideas that serve your target audience. Next, ask around to find if anyone else is already performing or offering the opportunities you're considering. If they are being offered, don't reinvent the wheel; pitch in instead! If no is the answer, move to the last consideration: how much money will we need to launch this idea or event. The actual money required should be the last thing considered. Making money the first concern limits ministry. Start with good ideas for ministry and, because committed people believe in them and know the idea is important, the money will be managed.

### Myth #3:

#### ***The Church Will Support Youth Ministry Without Any Help from Me***

In many ways, the old adage, "Out of sight, out of mind" is very appropriate in youth ministry. The church members want youth ministry to be vital, but they may think at times it is chaotic and loud. For times like these they hire people to take the youth to an out-of-the-way part of the church. Some members may feel similarly about the youth

budget: youth ministry ought to raise its own finances.

To combat this malady, learn to be proactive at budget planning time. Suggest an ideal of budgeting one hundred dollars per active youth in the ministry. If you have ten active youth, incredible ministry can happen with a one-thousand-dollar budget. If there are one hundred youth, ten thousand dollars would be the standard. More money is always a plus, less is workable. In any event, a one-hundred-dollars-per-youth objective offers a standard to work with in planning and organizing at budget time.

In the United Methodist Church most budgets are submitted in late summer or early fall. This is when finance campaigns and committees begin to work toward finalizing and formalizing a budget for the next calendar year. That means budget planning needs to begin eighteen to twenty-four months in advance. All the training, planning, working, details, facts, costs, anticipating inflation, potential growth, rentals, and surprise expenses have to be clearly thought through. Waiting until the last day to throw together a few lines of information and attaching some random guesses of cost don't call forth trust or respect.

Being proactive means taking the initiative to demonstrate that the youth are involved, and the ministry is making a positive difference in their lives. This way, when talking about increasing the budget, the quality of the ministry is evident. Never assume the church members know what kinds of things are going on in the youth program, much less that they'll want to increase church support through budget increases. Be

proactive! Demonstrate that money is well administered and well accounted for, and thus maximize the chance of further support.

One little caveat about being proactive in the financial campaigns and strategies of your church: Be aware of persons who are serving on the finance committee who support youth ministry. These persons are not to serve as spies but as supportive voices who advocate for youth. Such persons can be valuable members to youth serving on the finance committee, and they can lend support to the financing of youth ministries.

### Myth #4:

#### ***I'm Never Tempted by the Cash I Handle***

Let's be realistic. We're all basically human beings cut out of a similar bolt of cloth. Dealing with large amounts of loose cash can be very tempting! These thoughts, however brief, are normal. It's at these points of temptation that individuals find out what their true character is. Basically, some handle it better than others, but everyone faces these and similar kinds of temptations with money.

If you know that handling cash is a difficult temptation, stop handling the cash! Put procedures and other people in place to handle all the money. When someone inadvertently hands you checks or money, point him or her in another direction, saying, "I don't do money!" Setting this up is actually not difficult. Take the money completely out of your path, reduce the temptations, and eliminate the stress that is endemic to being responsible for other people's funds.

If you are a person who loses things frequently, don't play games with the bank roll. Don't carry the cash for the trip. Identify someone else who has a sixth sense about keeping track of things. That person will glow in the responsibility, do a better job than you would, and leave you free to focus on matters you do handle well. If you're someone who has no trouble facing these concerns and temptations, and seldom, if ever, lose or misplace things, then make choices as the situation warrants. Ask yourself, "Why hang on to a part of the job that is high stress?" Give the bank bag to someone else who is trustworthy and willing to face the mountain of paperwork and accounting that accompanies money. Everyone wins!

### Myth #5:

#### ***Austerity Is a Sign of Godliness***

At times there is the impression that having, or aspiring to have, a larger and larger budget indicates amateurish ambition. Others would have us believe that genuine Christian youth ministries shun such worldly devices. Another attitude suggests that having little or no budget is somehow more meritorious and holy. Budget size is not an adequate indicator of the effectiveness or importance of your church's ministry with youth. Such thinking is like dividing a random whole number by a day of the week to find the direction of the wind. Whole numbers exist, days of the week exist; but they have precious little to do with wind direction.

There are too many variables surrounding money issues to make

bottom-line assumptions about who is more helpful and who is not. The only real conclusions we can draw are the ones that concern our own individual ministries and then only after careful and honest reflection. To wade through the morass of this issue, we must examine some basic assumptions about the relationship of money and ministry.

Some youth ministries are cash-driven and others are kingdom-based. Cash-driven programs are those whose planning begins by establishing how much cash is available and then planning programs to fit. When the cash is gone the programs drift until the next budget allotment. In these groups, available money is what drives planning. Don't misunderstand: many operate on the best of motives using this model. Available cash is put to good and godly use, spread around doing missions, worthy and credible endeavors.

However, this method rests on a sand foundation when rock is what Christ admonishes us to use. Stable ministry foundations have God's kingdom as the heart and core of planning and everything else follows. Any youth ministry founded on the promise of salvation through Jesus Christ ought to be kingdom-based, or intended to bring about the realm of God.

The kingdom way begins by evaluating problems and needs in light of what God wants for a loving and just world. The second step is leveraging resources, material and human, to create solutions. When, and if, the money dries up, seek new ways to support the solution instead of feeling defeated.

### **Ways to Pay**

Mobilizing all kinds of resources—monetary, material, as well as human—is essential to full-blown problem solving. However, since this particular section of the handbook is about budgets, we'll focus on the dollars and cents. Once the annual budget is established and dollar amounts are certain, how else are resources generated to facilitate trips, retreats, missions, scholarships, and special activities at the church? One of the most popular ways with the elders of the congregation is the self-supporting method.

### **Self-Supporting**

Self-supporting, in budgetary terms, means "those who play are the ones who pay." The total cost of an event is divided up among the paying participants and, after everyone chips in, everything is paid. If the weekend retreat costs one thousand dollars and twenty people attend, each person will have to pay fifty dollars to generate the income to pay for it. This is a self-supporting budget model. Use caution here: Be careful there aren't kids who wish they could participate but, because they can't afford to, don't even bother signing up. Every budget should include a hefty chunk of cash for scholarships. The other primary way of increasing funds is through fund raisers.

### **Fundraisers**

Fundraising often seems like a second career for youth workers. In a church that is youth-oriented, youth need to be involved in earning their own way. Fundraising makes events and outings possible. Kids who raise

**Options:**

- 1. Sell the service of delivering small candies with personal notes attached.**
- 2. Donations for: parent's night out, lawn work, window washing, spring or fall cleaning, baby sitting, pool cleaning, pet sitting or walking.**
- 3. "A-thon's" where pledges are committed for each segment completed; walk, baseball, rocking chair, bike, starve, talk, clean, rake, etc.**
- 4. Individual pledging.**
- 5. Sales: bake, rummage, crafts, cookbooks, refreshments, birthday calendars, flowers, plants, eggs, no-bake sale, stationery, pecans, T-shirts, Sunday coffee, juice and muffins.**
- 6. Carwash, sell tickets in advance or take the car wash door to door.**
- 7. Free carwash, secure pledges in advance for each car washed.**
- 8. Dinners: spaghetti, pancake, chicken; serve meal for ongoing group in church such as UMW, senior citizens, children's choir, etc.; banquets, fish fry, barbecue chicken take-out, Mother's Day, Father's Day.**
- 9. Ice cream social.**
- 10. Drives: paper, aluminum cans, bottles, etc.**
- 11. Conduct carnivals or fairs.**
- 12. Booth at local festivals.**
- 13. Refreshment stands at football games, airports, etc.**
- 14. Pre-sell pizzas or sub sandwiches, then make and deliver them ready to be frozen for use anytime.**
- 15. Dinner theater, concerts, or talent shows.**
- 16. Yard sales or flea markets.**
- 17. Christmas gift-wrapping service.**

money benefit from working together, achieving goals, and assuming responsibilities. But it is also important that youth workers and the youth ministry itself do not get lost or sidetracked due to fundraising.

The best fund raisers are the ones that trade goods or services for cash. This isn't to say these types of programs make the most money; it's just that the people shelling out the cash are more motivated to give. Offering to wash windows or cars, prepare food, or deliver cards all have a common denominator in that there is a fair product in exchange for money earned. Consignment sales are also a good way to raise cash. Be careful not to get involved with a company where the youth group has to purchase the goods first and then sell them. This isn't consignment, by definition. It's commerce; buy low and sell high. Look for the agencies that allow you to sell their goods, let's say candy, and then ship back what wasn't sold. Keep the church out of the business of retail sales.

Pledged-based fundraisers are popular but done too often, and people stop supporting them. In time it appears that kids sit for hours playing games and watching television while the supporters cash in stocks and bonds to support it and get little in return.

**Scholarships**

There are people who don't have resources that allow youth to participate even in basic activities. Be aware of such situations and be prepared to help. One primary way of assuring that everyone who wants to participate can is by providing scholarships. Administering scholarships can be tricky on a number of accounts.

First, many times the youth who need help will not ask for it. Second, some parents may be hesitant to request help because they want to appear financially stable. A third issue is, of course, how much do you budget to assist unknown numbers of scholarships for which trips or events? Let's look at each of these one at a time.

The first is dealing with youth who will not ask for assistance because they've been taught that they don't need to take charity. Begin by taking the word "scholarship" out of the realm of charity and attach to it work. Call it a work grant. Set things up so money can be earned, worked for. Now, don't go overboard. A youth who has money woes usually doesn't have time to get a job. If they had time to do extensive work for youth program cash, they'd have the time to get a real job for their money. So a subtle trade off is in order.

Consider putting dollar amounts on certain token but concrete tasks that are always around: helping with loading and unloading luggage for a retreat; helping re-pack the food for an event; helping with the cleanup on the day after a big event; etc. Another way is to have some work done around your office when there is a convenient time for everybody. Keep in mind that this is an excellent time to deepen a relationship with various youth. Think of jobs that can be done in some proximity to you as opposed to a task they must do alone. "Help me do this, or that," is preferred to "call me if you need any help."

The point is, in attaching a task to the cash, don't go overboard and make a chore out of a chance to assist and help the group out. If the

labor is not fair or relational, youth won't do it and hence will not avail themselves of a work grant. The bottom line here is having them attend the event. If the task is too difficult or time-consuming, it's like saying, "We don't want you along that much anyway."

A second concern is parents who appear to be financially stable but are really living from pay check to pay check; that's most of us. These conscientious people are understandably reluctant to avail themselves of a free scholarship. It might appear that they're double-dipping or taking advantage. Everybody, regardless of their level of income, has a bad month from time to time. So phrase scholarships or work grants in such a way to suggest if this is bad month, just for now, use a scholarship. Add that if they can pay it back sometime before the end of the year, the money will be gladly received; but if it isn't, that's fine. This approach is a graceful way of putting almost everyone in the same boat, because indeed we all have had bad months when extra expenses came and extra income didn't. Now nearly everyone can participate in available help without guilt or shame.

A third concern is how much money to set aside for scholarships when the number of recipients is not known. The best recommendation is to start small and grow steadily. Establish a scholarship fund for the best and most important trip in a year. For example, set up two or three scholarships for an annual mission trip or the big spiritual life retreat. This is a beginning. If five people come forward to ask for assistance, sort it out. Maybe split the money evenly or find additional cash through a church angel.

Church angels are specific people in the congregation who volunteer to write a scholarship check when asked; just call them. They agree to write a check to support one youth. Curiously, most of the people who agree to participate in this manner also want to remain anonymous. It's pleasantly surprising to see how many people willingly agree to this kind of support. It doesn't take long to get an adequate list. As time goes on, experience will dictate whether more or less cash needs to be put into scholarship accounts or church angel lists need to grow.

Scholarships are very important. No promotional fliers or registration forms should ever go out that don't clearly state that financial arrangements are willingly discussed. Never let it be said that a kid stayed home from any event because of finances. One of two things should happen if that situation does arise: (1) increase available scholarship monies, or (2) reduce the overhead of trips and programs of the youth ministry.

### ***Setting up a Budget***

An actual budget form should have enough information to sufficiently inform a reader of how much is being requested and for what general reasons. Too little information or too much information are both red flags that beg people to get sidetracked into non-essential control issues. A budget will necessarily reflect each group's unique needs and programs, but there are general areas that shape what a typical budget looks like.

### **Category 1**

Program expenses. In this category list the estimated costs of providing weekly programs. Include such items as; curriculum, games, materials, supplies, snack foods and beverages, field trips, and the like. Try establishing a general dollar amount for each week of programming, such as ten dollars per week. Multiply this times the number of programs, and that line item is complete. On a budget it might look like this:

#### **Weekly Program Expenses**

Includes: food, beverage, activity materials, curriculum, supplies, etc.  
45 programs at \$10  
per week .....\$450

### **Category 2**

Events / Retreats and Trips. In this category list each event or trip separately, but don't go into too much detail. Give the name or location of the event or trip and a ball park cost estimate. You may list big-ticket items such as outside speakers, bands, and the like to clarify why one trip is so much different from another. Entries in this category might look like this:

#### **Trips and Retreats**

Annual Spiritual Life Retreat ...\$350  
Annual Mission Trip  
Hotels, tools, food, gas,  
vehicle rentals, and  
training weekend .....\$4,725  
Water Slide Bonanza .....\$55  
Scholarships.....\$150  
Senior High Beach Blast  
Lodge rental, food, honoraria  
for speaker, supplies and  
worship materials .....\$275

Other categories might include: recreation equipment, entrance fees, outreach, insurance, special one-time costs, continuing education, counselor training, and maintenance.

Regardless of the components or categories in a budget, be careful what information is included. Be clear about each item and how you will present the plans and make the requests for funding. Too much detail in the budget is an open invitation for lots of questions and meddling. There is a time for questioning, tinkering, and discussing basic orientations of youth ministry within a congregation, but budget approval time isn't one of them. That kind of foundational work ought to have been done well before the goals of the youth ministry were decided, planned, and placed into budget form.

When a properly developed budget is presented, the recipients will see shared goals and visions represented. They will see items and costs that blend with the visions of the whole community of faith. In a properly and carefully developed budget, the congregation will want to support the plan and the ministry opportunities it represents.

## **Youth Service Fund**

The Youth Service Fund (YSF) is money given by youth, administered by youth, and used to serve youth. YSF is a means of stewardship education and mission support of youth within The United Methodist Church. Not just a scheme to raise money, the Youth Service Fund is a commitment of United Methodist youth to serve youth in need — locally and globally. The Youth Service Fund was created in 1968, during the merger

of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren Church. The Methodists had the MY (Methodist Youth) Fund and the Evangelical United Brethren had the Youth Fund, and after the merger the Youth Service Fund was formed.

The Youth Service Fund is the only authorized United Methodist fund directly related to youth and over which youth have primary administrative control. The United Methodist Church is the single major denomination which offers a mission fund raised and spent by youth. All YSF funds are dedicated to projects that benefit and empower youth. The Youth Service Fund giving is considered “second-mile giving” because it does not replace the responsibility of youth to give through their local church. Many youth ministries take a YSF offering every week. Others give a tithe from their fund-raising to YSF. It has been estimated that if every United Methodist youth would give just a dollar a week, we could raise more than one million dollars a year for YSF.

Money given to the Youth Service Fund supports projects through two agencies. Seventy percent of the funds raised by your annual conference youth is retained and administered by your conference council on youth ministry. Of this portion, one-third pays for administration, one-third supports projects within the conference, and one-third goes to projects outside the conference. Thirty percent of the total is forwarded to the National Youth Ministry Organization (NYMO). Of this portion, a minimum of eighty percent supports national and international mission projects. The remainder pays for YSF administration and promotion.



**For more extensive fundraising ideas, strategies, and planning forms, get *Youth Fundraisers: Raising Money That Counts*, by Lynn Strother Hinkle (Abingdon).**

During 1995, eighteen youth ministry projects throughout the United States, India, and Africa received over \$104,000 in funding from national (30 percent) portion of funds raised for YSF in 1994. 10 percent of that amount went to the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) to alleviate world hunger.

In your annual conference and through NYMO, YSF projects are carefully selected by a committee of youth and adult workers with youth.

Each project chosen to receive funding is evaluated according to a process which measures the clarity of purpose, the extent to which youth are empowered to be in ministry, the degree of benefit to youth, significance of the monetary impact on the project, and relationship to National Youth Ministry Organization goals and priorities.

Projects must be youth-related, youth being defined as youth 12–18 years old in the United States and up to age 30 for international projects. Youth must be involved in the orientation, planning, programming, administration, and leadership of the project. No more than 25 percent of the grant can be used for administration or salaries. The project must address at least one of NYMO's priorities chosen at its biennial Legislative Assembly.

How can youth have a voice in what projects Youth Service Fund

supports? Contact your conference council on youth ministry and give an opinion. Better yet, create, design or discover a worthy project and apply for funding from your conference, other conferences, and the National Youth Ministry Organization Steering Committee's Project Review Committee.

Half the fun of supporting Youth Service Fund is raising the money! Creative fundraisers are as unique as your youth ministry. Your imagination is a great place to begin. You can call the NYMO office and ask them to mail or fax you a list. Here are just a few to consider. **Innisbrook Wrapping Paper** sales. Your youth get 50 percent and YSF automatically gets an additional 3 percent. Give it all to YSF or split it! Call 1-800-334-8461. Sell **Human-i-tees**, T-shirts with a great environmental message. You get three dollars for every shirt you sell. You can tithe or give it all to YSF. They donate 20 percent to environmental groups and an extra twenty-five dollars to YSF for every one hundred shirts sold. Call 1-800-275-2638. Tell about YSF and ask for ten-dollar donations. For each ten dollars, give people a rechargeable YSF Pre-paid Calling Card. YSF gets \$3.25 for each card and an ongoing percentage every time the card is recharged.

Make and sell friendship bracelets. Sponsor a walk-a-thon, bike-a-thon, rock-a-thon, starve-a-thon, read-a-thon, talk-a-thon, or a move-along-a-thon. Have a Valentine's Day dance, square dance night, or a line-dance school. Auction off lost and found items or youth memorabilia, old mission trip T-shirts, or dinner with the pastor. Sacrifice a soda a week. What about one less CD or tape this month?



And now for the . . .

## **BIG QUESTION:**

Why is it really important to support Youth Service Fund? Youth who support YSF benefit from putting their faith into action as disciples of Christ and stewards of God's good gifts. Stewardship is an act of faithful, responsible use of all our resources, including time, talent, tissue, trash, gifts, grace, energy, enthusiasm, and money. The vows of church membership commit us to support The United Methodist Church with our prayers, our presence, our gifts, and our service. The Youth Service Fund provides one excellent way of keeping that commitment. YSF offers youth an opportunity to participate in peace and justice making. The Youth Service Fund makes dreams possible by giving support to tutoring programs, life-skill development, spiritual growth retreats, feeding hungry street children, on-site job training, money management education, and overcoming prejudice, oppression, and abuse.

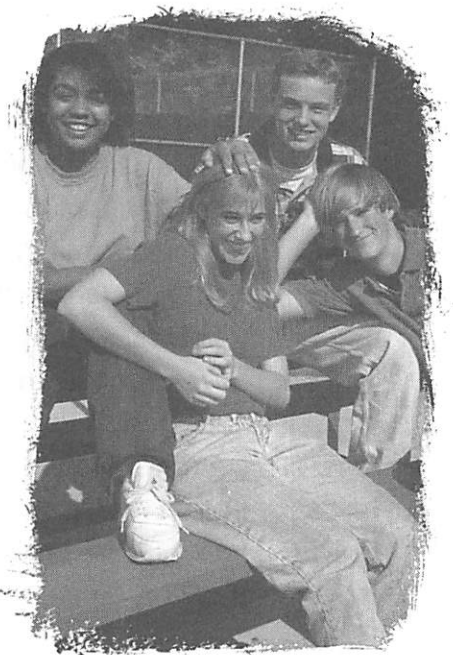


**How does the Youth Service Fund work? First, money is raised by the youth of your church. Then the money is sent from your church to the treasurer of your annual conference. 70 percent of that amount stays in the annual conference Youth Service Fund. 30 percent is forwarded by the annual conference treasurer to the National Youth Ministry Organization. 80 percent of the NYMO amount goes to projects selected by the Project Review Committee. The remaining 20 percent of the NYMO amount goes to education of youth about YSF and administration of the fund.**



**Notes:**

## Chapter 8: Using and Developing Resources



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**Resources are everywhere.** They come as books, compilations done by authors, editors, youth workers, thinkers, and preachers. Resources come in the form of programs, books on games, books of great ideas, in volumes and volumes.

**Resources are everywhere.** They come on videos, tapes, compact discs, computers, the internet, faxes, CD-ROM's, through movie theaters, through television, plays, drama, and poetry.

**Resources are everywhere.** They come via preachers and teachers; youth workers and youth; writers of poetry and journals; sharers of experiences, thoughts, reflections.

Resources are everywhere. They come from the trees, the wind, the rising and setting of the sun and the moon, the twinkling stars as we ponder God's universe. They come through the tactile feelings of water, heat, breezes, pain, body movement, dance, and food.

Resources are everywhere we look, everywhere we touch, feel and think. With an abundance of potential resources around us, what can they do for us, how do they help us in our youth ministry?

### ***A Basic Consideration***

One thing we do know about resources is that the best ones are those which engage youth physically and actively in learning. We know

conclusively that the most engaging materials invite youth to participate so they feel their presence makes a contribution and a difference. Youth, like all of us, want to feel that their attendance was meaningful and the group better for their participation. They want to make a difference. Too often kids feel they make the effort to show up and no one cares. To assure a meaningful resource or program, this issue must be addressed. Effective use of a resource invites a personal response from the participants: thinking, feeling, imagining, questioning, considering, fact finding, mind stretching, spiritual questing, decision making, growing in faith, and taking action.

In short, effective use of resources enables youth in your youth group to grow in discipleship. Today's teens want to make a difference, sharing a bit of who they are, a bit of what they know, for the good of the whole community. It's this point that keeps youth coming back time and again. Some packaged programs address this; many do not. We are all challenged to make resources work for our individual groups.

### **Packaged Programs**

We cannot go to some imaginary resource labeled: **Fail-safe Ideas for**



**Is there a single place in your church building where the books, supplies, magazines, and other paraphernalia regarding youth ministry are kept? Keeping a library that is focused on youth ministry can be a wonderful resource in and of itself. If one already exists, does it need updating, cleaning, or re-arranging? Is there a way to generate funds for new material, such as a book drive, or special fund raiser for the benefit of the youth resource area?**

**Use on a Sunday Night** and expect our ministry to grow into something special and lasting! Some of the packaged "programs" may get you through a specific Sunday night meeting, a particular retreat, or an upcoming event; but over the long haul, there will be little continuity. There are specific things resources cannot do.

**These materials cannot guarantee an effective youth ministry.**

Some persons tend to blame failure of a meeting or activity on the program materials. Yet even the best materials have to be used properly, and people make decisions about what materials to use and how to use them for their particular group. People are the key to an effective youth ministry.

**No resource guarantees genuine learning will take place.**

Materials can, in a multitude of ways, provide information, but resources alone simply cannot serve as a substitute for the most necessary element: a person's desire and willingness to grow.

Materials written to a general audience cannot come alive by themselves.

In order to be "on target" for a particular gathering, resource materials have to be shaped, adapted—sometimes radically—and occasionally overhauled from top to bottom.

**Published material cannot be expected to be universally significant.**

Regardless of who the leaders are, all have good and bad days which can affect how a meeting unfolds. Also, learners and participants may be more receptive at some times than others. Subject matter may be more relevant to certain individuals than to others. So we learn to be flexible and to adapt resources to our particular situations, moods, and attitudes. Remember, the best any of us can do in nearly any circumstance is to exercise our acceptance of and caring for each other in the name of Christ.

**These materials don't teach or train how to listen, how to look, and how to regard the individuals who make up your target ministry.**

There is a saying, "There are not youth groups; there are only individual youth that make up groups." Resources deal with youth in general rather than YOUR teens. The average resource is by nature generic, lacking the personal touch that marks a good activity or event.

### ***Selecting Resources***

In selecting resource materials that will be effective for your youth group, ask the following questions:

- Is the resource truly suited to your youth? Is it too simple or

is it over their heads? Is it designed for the age level using it? Does it duplicate content or methods recently used? Is it relevant to the concerns of your youth? Does its focus fit your vision of youth ministry?

- Will the resource truly help you achieve your goal? Will it really help move you in the general direction of your overall vision? Does it do what you want to do?
- How much adaptation or reworking will the resource require? Program materials often have to be adapted to fit specific needs and situations. Adaptation is commendable because it shows that the youth using the resource are trying to make it truly their own, geared to their meeting. Large scale reworking can be very time-consuming. If this route is necessary, be sure the project is really worth it. If not, look for another resource better suited to your theme.
- Will your budget stand the expense? Obviously, some resources cost more than others, so weigh them carefully.
- When using resources not published by The United Methodist Church, ask these questions: Is the resource biblically, theologically, and educationally sound? Does it reflect a theology consistent with that of The United Methodist Church? Ask your pastor or Christian educator to help you evaluate the resource you are considering.



**Using materials that are consistent with United Methodist beliefs requires some basic understanding of what those beliefs are. If your group is not clear on the basics of our denomination, what would be required to change that? What procedure should be followed to set up some meetings where these topics are discussed? Is there someone who would be willing and able to teach this material creatively?**

One of the strengths in using United Methodist resources is that they are designed and developed under the mandate of The United Methodist Church to be biblically, theologically, and educationally sound. They are by no means the only sound resources available. Other denominations produce excellent resources as well. However, resources produced by The United Methodist Church are designed specifically for use by United Methodists and can help us learn about ourselves as United Methodist Christians.

6. Consider creating your own resources. This takes time and a degree of self-motivation, but it can be very rewarding. Test your ideas with others, consult specialists in youth ministry around your area—anyone, especially youth, who can serve as a listener.

### ***Using Resources***

So what *can* resources provide? Think of resources as you would an encyclopedia. To make an encyclo-



**Effective use of resources, shaping, re-arranging, substituting, is something anyone can do; age is no limitation. All**

**that is required is some patience and research. Don't overlook other people as a place to get great ideas. Try your hand at identifying a need that fits within the goals of the ministry, name a theme, and begin! In no time you can develop a knack for pulling various ideas and activities into an engaging time.**

pedia work, you must already have an idea of what you want to find—a topic, theme, or subject. No one walks into a class and begins teaching by reading from a book labeled “Volume A to D.” That’s not how an encyclopedia is supposed to work. We have to have some sense of where we want to go, open its volumes, look for things that equip, share, and bring light to what conforms to our focus.

### **A Sample of Process**

For example, suppose you want to focus on learning more about Lent. The stated goal would be that the youth have a better understanding of Lent, and then, as a way of preparing for Easter, make a Lenten resolution.

Beginning with resource books, look in the index for the topic, “Lent.” Suppose one of the things there is a Lenten quiz where photocopies are to be made and each person takes the quiz and discusses the answers. This is a common packaged program approach. When everyone

has completed it, he or she should have a greater understanding of Lent. The material might be notable, but suppose the method isn’t your cup of tea because your teens loathe pencil-and-paper formats. So, you are challenged to find a way of presenting the same questions in a way your kids do enjoy—role playing, for example. Some groups are especially fond of this learning style, especially when a video camera is added.

Now you need to discover ways of having the kids “act out” the quiz information. With a little rewriting and staging, you are on your way. For example, instead of picking the correct response from a multiple choice question, change it so one of the correct answers is acted out and ask the “audience” to guess the question.

There are some considerations. Few people enjoy just jumping into role plays. You need a warm-up activity, easing them into acting in front of one another. So open with an exercise, ice breaker, or some other kind of warm-up activity. Referring to resources of games, seek an activity that gets them moving and calls for some acting out in front of one another. This then makes the role play later on easier to get into. Don’t concern yourself about the content or the point of the opening game: it doesn’t have to be about Lent; it only has to help them be comfortable with acting and moving.

Now, thinking through the program, the physical aspects are covered, but what about the mental? There is a possible concern about moving from a goofy crowd breaker right into serious role playing. Remembering that the goal is to help them understand and have a meaningful Lenten season, you will know

that a slap-stick mentality isn't the best. What is needed is a step in-between these two pieces that will settle them down.

Again, resources can be helpful. Search for an item that eases the group from zany to serene. Lent is a time of preparation, a time of repentance. Repentance is acknowledging that not everything is okay with me. There are spaces in my body, my soul, my heart, where Christ is not able to come in because I'm too busy with other priorities. It would be wonderful to conclude this study by reinforcing the idea that we need to make time and space for Christ, calling for young people and adults to make a new commitment to Christ.

So look for any kind of activity that dwells on the pitfalls of busyness. You are looking for activities that illustrate how loading up calendars and schedules leaves precious little time for daily prayer and devotion with God.

A simple method might be performed with labeled tennis balls. Ask two youth to play catch, using this one rule: each time they throw a ball they must call out the name written on it. On the first ball print the single word "homework." After they've played catch with this one ball for a moment saying the word "homework" each time, add another labeled "student council," another labeled "youth group," then "sports," "rehearsals," "practice," and so on, naming the tasks that typically occupy the time of your teens. (Ping-Pong balls would also work.) In a very short time, they aren't going to be handling all the balls coming and going. This then becomes a symbol of how our lives tend to become if we continually pack them with busyness.



**For information or questions about United Methodist curriculum resources, call Curric-U-Phone. 1-800-251-8591.**

When the players in this demonstration are barely hanging on, toss in another ball labeled "time with God." Eventually the players drop balls and frantically begin trying to catch anything regardless of the implications. This makes a striking visual introduction to the serious part of the theme for the night: "If we're going to experience Lent in a meaningful way, we need to make room for a resurrection of God's power and influence in our lives." The point will be well made and this is an excellent way to move from fun games to the meat of the program. A worshipful closing about resolutions will complete the evening nicely.

Looking back over the total plan, make sure the pieces are in place to meet the stated goal: "Making more room for Christ by a Lenten denial of something." Now you have a creative and relevant plan where your youth are heavily involved.

Where did that outline come from? Perhaps it could be found in a book, and it might work for your meeting just as it's written. More than likely anything written to a general audience will deserve some careful review. Leaders should think through how the different parts of any material would play out in your specific context; what extras need to be built around and into the event, what aspects need more shaping? Consideration of the ages, maturity, and spiritual depth of your group must be taken into account as well. When all



**The *UMY Program Annual* (Cokesbury) is a United Methodist resource that provides a wide variety of programs for youth fellowship groups. Three volumes of the resource are available.**

of this is carefully weighed, you're making the best of what resources can offer for everyone involved.

### ***Points to Remember***

In considering any resource, follow these steps:

- How can the core idea be best communicated with my particular teens? Think about the persons individually as

much as possible. Then think about which method(s) will best communicate the core idea to them.

- Approach resources with some notion of a goal—a theme, an idea, a topic, which you know is germane and of interest to them and serves your overall vision.
- Plan, but stay flexible. Have a plan for opening, continuing, and ending. Aim for wide-spread participation. Adapt resources to fit the amount of time available. Don't try to cram too much in. If the discussion takes a turn you had not planned, let it go that way as long as it seems helpful and is not too far from the goal.





## Chapter 9: Building Partnerships



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### **Civic Youth-Serving Agencies**

Some wonderfully effective youth ministries happen right under our very noses: Campfire, 4-H, Girl Scouts of the USA, and Boy Scouts of America. These four agencies are all based on teaching Christian-based values, citizenship, and providing young people opportunities for growth. While we may not immediately connect these with traditional church ministries, many goals are held in common.

Elements for growth abound. One of the more significant opportunities is through the positive peer relationships these agencies provide. Another is the systematic way they train and encourage youth to assume roles of leadership. While teaching skills of citizenship and personal accomplishment in a variety of areas, they also encourage participants, both youth and adult, to discover and respond to the spirit of God as they journey. This is reinforced by the abundant opportunities to support others around them by using the new understandings they've acquired and happens within the context of the fun and excitement of adventure, trying new things and developing new skills.

Your present youth ministry can be greatly enhanced or built upon one of these experiences. As an example let's look at an older youth

division of the Boy Scouts of America, the Explorers. Normally when we think of the Boy Scouts, we think of olive green, rolled-up neckerchiefs, sashes of merit badges, and campouts. Some of that is valid, but some of it has changed. Explorer Posts are much harder to identify by outward appearances. By filling out a simple form and supplying an annual fee that's less than feeding a family of four at a fast food restaurant, your youth ministry can become an Explorer Post! Now, why would you want to do this?

Once your youth ministry is recognized as part of Boy Scouts of America, a world of resources is available to you. Top notch and inexpensive travel insurance is obtainable for your group to use. All the equipment and resources they have are open for you to use. Immediate supervisory help is available through paid and trained district directors, who can be very helpful. They can provide training, guidelines, and access to some of the finest camps, retreat centers, and facilities in the nation—many times at little or no cost.

There is an outstanding Scout Preserve in the Florida Keys. In order to appreciate the beauty of this huge park, you'll need scuba gear because it's all underwater, its reef teeming with marine life and excellent diving opportunities! The only catch is, you have to be connected to Scouting to

use it. Can you see the possibilities?

A similar opportunity is connected to the Boundary Water Canoe Area, a vast expanse of some of the finest flat water canoeing in the entire world. The BWCA is located in the border area of Minnesota and Canada. These two opportunities are simply the beginning of an exciting range of possibilities.

Another reason to become an Explorer Post is its flexibility for individuals to develop their own interest areas and affinities. The interests can be from quilt making to skateboarding to math brain teasers, or all three of those rolled into one.

Find out which of these civic youth-serving agencies are possibilities in your area, and consider developing them for new opportunities for youth. People are no different today than at any other time in history; each person feels better when he or she has a tangible place to belong. Civic agencies such as these can widen the options available to the youth in your community. Both youth and adults can find new ways to involve themselves in these areas and still be connected to the overall ministry of the church and its young people.

### **Support Groups**

One of the church's many roles throughout its history has been that of caring community or support group. People are in need of grace, unconditional love, hope, and salvation. They turn to the church. We get together in the church to talk about our situations, to share insights with each other, to offer one another support and encouragement. Youth ministry offers a supportive atmosphere to many young people. We come

together to share our joys and celebrations. We come together to share our fears and concerns. We come together to find Christ's strength in each other. We play together and sing together and eat together and worship together. We find supportive friends and mentors.

Sometimes we encounter situations or problems in our lives that church youth ministry cannot address. We encounter challenges in our lives, or in the lives of young people, that need the attention of those who have specialized professional training. We occasionally need to be with other persons who understand our feelings, who share our troubles, and have developed coping skills they can share. Support groups can be the answer in times of transition or crisis. Churches offer support groups. Youth-serving organizations offer support groups. Hospitals offer support groups. Where there are needs, there are support groups available.

There are support groups for survivors of violence, incest, abuse and trauma, for co-dependency and eating disorders, and for dealing with grief and loss. There are support groups for youth whose parents are separating, divorcing, and re-marrying, for single-parent families and for blended families. There are support groups for youth who are dealing with questions and concerns about their sexuality, for youth who have been raped or molested, for teenage parents. There are support groups for addicts and alcoholics, for teens who cannot communicate with their parents, for parents who cannot deal with their children constructively or positively.

In many communities there are

twelve-step groups developing as needs are identified. These are groups for youth and adults who want to deal with addictions and behaviors in a spiritually-centered environment. They are based on the Alcoholics Anonymous model of admitting powerlessness over behaviors and situations, giving them up, trusting God to help overcome them, and relying on others who are successful for insight, leadership, and encouragement.

The value of these and other groups is that they are designed to empower persons to deal with their own realities. They provide opportunities to develop coping skills and learn life skills for living with, overcoming, and even removing attitudes, behavior, and conditions which inhibit personal growth. Support groups restore self-confidence and esteem. They provide relationships and nurture.

The fact that these support groups exist is not that much of a mystery. The mystery sometimes is in knowing how to contact them or how to find a meeting close by. Your youth ministry can help solve the mystery of finding support groups. Become aware of organizations, meeting places, and times of support groups for youth and their families. You can obtain or create directories of youth-serving organizations and support groups, and make them available to youth inside and outside your church. Persons in need of help with critical situations or problems rely on mentors and trusted friends to help give direction to places of support and help. Some organizations and/or agencies require referral from professionals.

Find out where the agencies are, what services are offered, what the

cost (if any) is, what the referral process is, and provide help for youth and their families to make contacts and referral.

### **Meeting at the Pole and Other Places**

Church youth ministry has never operated in a vacuum. In fact, careful analysis shows that for the most part, church youth ministries take their shape from successful parachurch ministries.

The word *parachurch* is based on the greek prefix *para* which means "along side of", or "beside." In our context, youth ministries that have evolved independently from any denominational ties are commonly referred to as "parachurch." Ministries, such as Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Youth for Christ, Young Life, Meet at the Pole, and InterVarsity Christian Fellowship are specific examples of parachurch groups and ministries which support youth ministry in the congregation. These ministries are not "stand alone" ministries or substitutes for congregational youth ministry. If we truly stand beside one another, how can we magnify cooperation and collaboration?

#### **1. Begin by clarifying your vision for ministry.**

For example, if your vision for ministry is reaching kids for Christ, how might parachurch ministries help your youth ministry move toward that vision? Such a vision is an invitation to work together. Try to think how specific parachurch groups help reach kids for Christ. Target audiences and styles of reach-



**Is there a monthly luncheon of youth workers in your area? If not, this could possibly be a fine way to begin bringing leadership of youth ministries of all kinds together. Youth and/or adults could be involved. Are there events or activities that could be done together to maximize the number of youth and adults who could participate? Touch base with others you may know are involved in different ministries. The next time your youth ministry leadership team meets, use brainstorming to create a quick list of parachurch organizations in your area! Then begin making contact with the leaders or attend a meeting. You might be surprised by ministry opportunities you find!**

ing young people may vary greatly from parachurch group to parachurch group. Jesus suggests that styles and methods are not the pivotal issue. Jesus said, "Whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40). There will always be differences of opinion about the most effective and lasting ways of sharing the salvation message. The words of Christ are simple and forthright. If, at the core, the spreading of the gospel to youth is paramount, the parachurch group and your youth ministry team are colleagues, not competitors.

## **2. Ask which teens the various groups are trying to reach?**

Some groups target any youth not currently involved with a church. Others try and reach youth in crisis by visiting jails. Some single out youth who have common affiliations such as sports or interests in a specific kind of Bible study or faith sharing. Churches tend to relate first to

youth of families who are members of the congregation. It will serve your youth leadership team well to know whose target audiences are whose — both your congregation's and the parachurch groups.'

## **3. Once visions and audiences are clear, respond creatively to the parachurch groups who "work alongside" your ministry.**

What ways can you be in ministry together? How can your ministry benefit from the work being done by the parachurch group? When can ministry be done together to benefit the total youth community in your area? When should things be done separately to better serve youth? Look for points of commonality. Try to reach agreement on strategies for ministry. When there is an obvious point of contention, let it go. Foster a spirit of cooperation instead of opposition. Do not become an adversary! Rather, become an ally whenever possible.

At times you may be unsure of ways to determine which ministries are compatible. In these situations, rely on John Wesley's rule of measurement: the Quadrilateral. In this unique matrix Wesley stressed first and foremost that a thing must be consistent with Scripture. When in alignment with scripture, the next tests are experience, reason and tradition. None of these can stand alone but must be examined together. Anything which squares with the quadrilateral should be allowed. Having a different opinion, in and of itself, isn't any reason to dislike or avoid one another. If we have a common vision for Christ, we should strive always to be in communication and prayer with one another. If

## *Chapter 9: Building Partnerships*

we have a common vision of bringing the person and message of Christ to youth, working together is critical. When we refuse to cooperate, youth can become confused about the message of the gospel and the church. We must help teens make all kinds of choices. Demonstrate God's grace in helping young people choose what is right for them.

Engage in ministry alongside others.

Most of us are aware that church is one option for families these days. Youth ministry competes with many other opportunities for young people. It is sometimes difficult for us to admit that we as the church might

not be able to be all things to all people. This is a fact, a reality. The church meets the critical needs of many youth, but not all youth and not all the time. We need to build partnerships with organizations and agencies in our communities that serve young people. There are times when referrals are needed. We are not in competition with other churches or institutions. We must learn to work with rather than against partner agencies and ministries. Potential partners can be friends who look to each other for expertise exchange and teamwork in the best interest of youth.



**Notes:**

# Chapter 10: Putting the United Methodist in Youth Ministry



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## Your Whole Church Address

Do you remember when, as a child, you were first able to list your entire address in this fashion: your name, house number, street, city, county, state, country, and planet? There is a wonderful sense of awareness in realizing that as big as it all is, you have a grasp of where you fit in the big picture.

In a similar way, United Methodism presents each of us an opportunity to list that kind of extended address. Each United Methodist church has a name and is located in a district, in a conference, in a jurisdiction, in a country on this planet, all within God's universe. This is workable because we are a connectional church. That means each United Methodist church is connected to every other United Methodist church. Each church within this connection is guided by the rules set out in the denomination's official book of rules and guidelines. This book is *The Book of Discipline*.

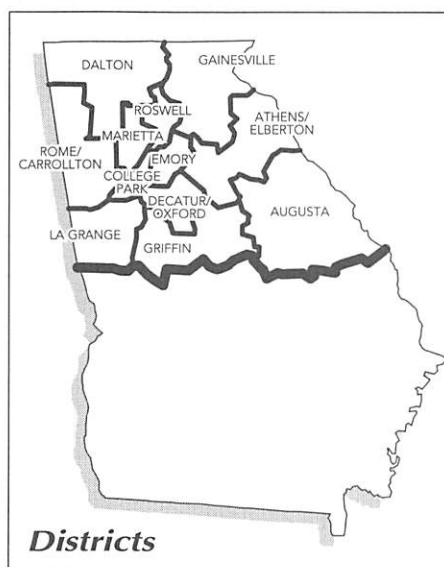
Knowing your complete church address and the way churches connect clarifies the big picture of our denomination. To learn how these fit together, let's look at the geographic structures of The United Methodist Church in this order: the local church, the district, the conference, the jurisdiction and the general church.

## Your Local Church

The first and most basic unit of organization in the connection is the local church. This is where we gather to worship, study, sing, and organize for service. Administration in the local church is by laity and clergy working together. Laity and clergy cooperatively provide leadership for all forms of ministry in their church.

The next part of your church address is the district.

## Your District



Districts provide churches in a given region opportunities to work more closely and to support one another. Each district has a unique name, different from the other districts in the same conference.

A district superintendent, one to a



**Many districts take their names from a major city within the boundaries of the district, a compass direction, or a county reference. From what point of reference does your home district draw its name? What is particular about ministries in your district?**

district, deals with the responsibility of organizing officers, guiding committees, and assigning pastors to churches according to the structure outlined in *The Book of Discipline*. The district superintendents have a major responsibility in knowing the clergy and the people of the churches in their area. When it comes time to appoint ministers, they rely on their knowledge to prayerfully try to match pastors and churches. District superintendents also become liaisons of communications with other members of the cabinet. The cabinet consists of the bishop and all the district superintendents in an annual conference.

Some districts further organize into sub-districts. Sub-districts allow for even more intimate cooperation between congregations. The sub-district is usually a loose organization of churches that cooperate to offer special programs, studies, share

resources, and sometimes even share leaders. In youth work, for example, sub-district structures allow for area churches to have cooperative programs. Sunday afternoon rallies are less complicated because groups don't have to travel far. At day rallies, kids who may attend the same area high schools and not know each other can get acquainted. These new relationships can be readily sustained because of geographical proximity, even though they attend different churches.

### ***Your Annual Conference***

Each local church is located within a district, and each district is located within an annual conference. In fact, an annual conference usually has many districts.

There are approximately 68 conferences in the United States, but this number changes as many conferences are merged or divided. Each conference has its own officers, priorities, and ministries which reflect the needs, concerns, and interests of the clergy and laity living and working there. Conferences offer a wonderful array of opportunities and many suit teens especially well—summer camps, service on boards and committees, holding elected positions to regional and national conferences, participating in special choirs and ministries, serving on mission projects, and more.

Every annual conference has coordinators of youth ministry; some are paid while others volunteer. These persons work with and for youth to effectively handle programs and events for the youth in their conference area. Each annual conference is presided over by a bishop who is a pastor elected by the juris-





diction and is appointed to annual conferences during jurisdictional conference.

### **Your Jurisdiction**

The United Methodist churches in North America are in five jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction is composed of various annual conferences. They are the Western Jurisdiction, the North Central Jurisdiction, the South Central Jurisdiction, the Southeastern Jurisdiction, and the Northeastern Jurisdiction.

In the United Methodist *Discipline* you can read about the Jurisdictional Youth Ministry Organization Convocation, Jurisdictional Youth Coordinators, youth steering committees, and other responsibilities youth have.

### **Central Conferences**

There are seven Central Conferences that lie outside the United States. The Central Conferences are: Central and Southern Europe, Africa, West Africa, Zaire, Germany, Northern Europe, and the Philippines.

### **The General Church**

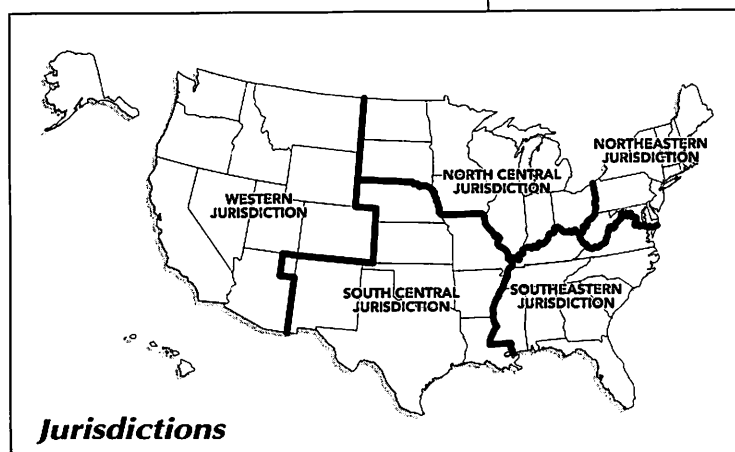
The General Conference is the legislative body of The United Methodist Church, consisting of an equal number of lay and clergy delegates elected by annual conferences. This body gathers every four years to act on priorities, legislation, the language of *The Book of Discipline*, and other concerns that affect the general church. The General Conference is the only church body that can speak for the entire denomination in an official capacity. The bishops preside over General Conference but have neither official voice nor vote. General boards and agencies are estab-



**Is there a natural grouping of churches in your area, a sub-grouping, that might benefit from planning a meeting or event together? Check with your youth worker or pastor—you may find some form of sub-district cluster already exists for your area. In either case, contacting other youth ministries, either through their youth officers or their adult leaders, and discussing the feasibility of a cooperative activity could put you well on your way to a sub-district strategy.**

lished by the general conference and are governed by a board of directors selected from annual conferences. Each agency is charged to fulfill its particular function as outlined by *The Book of Discipline*.

Offices for general church agencies are located throughout the U.S. The General Board of Discipleship, National Youth Ministry Organization, General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, General Commission on United Methodist Men, United Methodist Communications, and The United Methodist Publishing House are located in Nashville, Tennessee. The General Council on Finance and Administration, General Board of Pensions, and the General





**After acquainting yourself with all these different parts of the church structure, how do you find your whole United Methodist address? Begin by asking a United Methodist pastor, who can be very helpful as you work to find your proper church name, district, conference, and jurisdiction. This is information that might be worth posting in a conspicuous place.**

Commission on the Status and Role of Women are located in Evanston, Illinois. The General Council on Ministries is located in Dayton, Ohio. The General Board of Church and Society and the General Commission on Religion and Race are located in Washington DC. The General Board of Global Ministries and the General Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns is located in New York City, New York. The General Commission on Archives and History is located in Madison, New Jersey.

### ***A United and Connected Church***

The word *UNITED* in the name United Methodist is critical. People move for many reasons—college, a job, or some kind of opportunity. Moving is uncomfortable because familiarity is lost. Regardless where one moves, he or she will probably always be able to find a familiar United Methodist community of faith nearby. These connected churches rely on the same basic language, format, and operating procedures. In the chaos of moving and traveling, there can be a great deal of comfort and security in being a part of the

connection that we call the United Methodist Church.

Another strength of “the connection” is how it encourages people to work together and share resources. Sharing and striving together is much more productive than working individually and is a great model of Christian stewardship. Ministries sponsored by the congregations, districts, annual conferences, jurisdictions, central conferences, and general church unite our denomination for an effective witness of God’s gifts.

## **U.M. Speak**

*A Basic Glossary of Terms Unique to UMC*

Another way to improve understanding is to become familiar with the language of The United Methodist Church.

In any system or large organization, a certain amount of language that is unique to that body develops. Sometimes this special jargon is very confusing. The United Methodist Church is no exception in this matter. Below are some common terms that can be helpful. This is a brief sampling of a growing glossary which constantly changes.

### **Annual Conference**

This term refers to two distinct things. One is a geographic area of churches and the second is a meeting held once a year. Special sessions of annual conference may be held as the need arises.

The meeting is the business meeting composed of equal numbers of clergy and laity discussed previously. Each church within the conference provides at least one lay person as a member of the conference.

## Chapter 10: Putting the United Methodist in Youth Ministry

### Appointment

This term refers to a pastor's present location and assignment. Most of the time a pastor's appointment is to a church; for example, "Ms. Brown is appointed to pastor at First United Methodist Church." However, not all official appointments are to local churches. There are appointments beyond local churches, approved ministry assignments out in communities, towns, and cities. There are appointments to write curriculum, materials, and books. Other such appointments include chaplaincy, assignments to general boards and agencies, etc.

### Bishop

Bishops are ordained elders who have been elected by a central or jurisdictional conference and then consecrated to shepherd an episcopal area. Bishops are assigned to a territory made up of one or more annual conferences that are known as episcopal areas.

### The Book of Discipline

This is the basic guidebook for United Methodists. This book is usually available at the office of a United Methodist pastor. Many church libraries also keep a current copy of *The Book of Discipline*. Changes in *The Book of Discipline* are made every four years at the meeting of the General Conference.

### Book of Resolutions

This is the book which contains all the resolutions that are adopted by the General Conference.

### Cabinet

A term referring to the conference group that consists of all the district



**If you're interested in leadership positions in the local church, inquire about being nominated to one of the committees or boards.**

superintendents and the bishop of that conference. When these people meet together, it's said the cabinet is meeting. In some annual conferences the director of the Conference Council on Ministries meets with the cabinet as well.

### Church Council

The Church Council is the group in the local church that has the responsibility for planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness. It also is responsible for the administration of the local church. Each local church has the responsibility to organize itself in a way that will fulfill the mission of The United Methodist Church (to make disciples of Jesus Christ). Some churches may fulfill this responsibility by having an alternative organizational structure such as an Administrative Council or an Administrative Board and Council on Ministries.

### Clergy

Specifically applies to those who have been called by God and ordained as elders or deacons. The word "minister" is a term that applies to all Christians, clergy and laity alike.

### Connection

The network of United Methodist churches formed by the local churches, districts, annual confer-



**Each district has youth representatives who attend annual conference as full voting members. This can be an excellent way to have a significant part in the decisions of your conference. Contact your district superintendent and inquire about at-large youth delegate positions to your annual conference.**

ences, jurisdictions, central conferences, and the general conference.

### **Council on Ministries**

A committee may exist in local churches, districts, conferences, and jurisdictions. At the local church level it's the brainstorming group in the church that coordinates the work of committees and work areas.

### **District**

A geographic grouping of churches supervised by a district superintendent. Each district may have a council on ministry that has responsibility for planning and implementing the district ministries.

### **District Superintendent**

An ordained elder appointed by the bishop to supervise a given district. The supervision goes two ways; a district superintendent works with the churches and clergy of the district and serves as an extension of the conference administration by serving on the cabinet.

### **Forum of Adults in Youth Ministry, FAYM**

This national organization has a membership made up of those persons interested in or working with youth ministry. For more information,

write: FAYM, P.O. Box 23953, Nashville, TN 37202.

### **Itinerate**

The term means "to travel from place to place" and applies to United Methodist pastors as they are appointed to different churches within an annual conference. In The United Methodist church, congregations do not have a final voice in which pastor they will receive or for how long. After consulting with the local church and the cabinet, the bishop of the annual conference makes the appointments of pastors and the pastors itinerate as they are appointed.

### **Jurisdictions**

The five organizational groupings in the United States that include every local church, every district, and every conference. Northeastern, Southeastern, North Central, South Central and Western.

### **Laity**

This word technically refers to anyone who isn't a trained professional within a given field. For churches, the term refers to the people who are involved in the life of the church, attending, teaching, etc. but are not clergy.

### **Local Church**

People in congregations, the basic building block of the United Methodist connection. While the local churches connect in many ways, each still stands apart. There are many things each local church does which are unique and specific.

### **National Youth Ministry Organization**

This organization functions as an advocate for youth and youth min-

istry and administers the Youth Service Fund.

### **PPRC or SPRC**

PPRC stands for "Pastor Parish Relations Committee." SPRC stands for "Staff Parish Relations Committee." Some churches use the term SPRC to include other staff members in addition to the pastor. Some congregations use the PPR name. This committee is responsible for interpreting and helping the congregation and the pastors understand and work with each other and for recommending the salary for the pastor and other church staff persons.

### **Quadrennium**

The official four-year period between General Conferences. Many priorities and emphases established at General Conference last for a given quadrennium.

## **Being Connectional**

One of the things that makes The United Methodist Church unique is its organizational structure. Youth might do well to know the structure so they can use it. The structure begins with a local church or a small group of churches called a "charge." Each charge along with a number of other churches belongs to a district. In turn, several districts make up an annual conference. Several annual conferences (extending across state lines) make up a jurisdiction. There are five United Methodist jurisdictions in the United States. There are seven central conferences throughout the rest of the world. Charge, district, annual, jurisdictional, and central conferences are geographically defined. Combined, the local, dis-



**Speaking Connectionally: How to Speak United Methodism (United Methodist Communication) and Dictionary for United Methodists by Alan K. Waltz (Abingdon) will help you learn more United Methodist lingo.**

trict, conference, jurisdiction, and general conferences are what we refer to as the connectional system.

Youth ministry also has this connectional system. The local youth ministry is of the utmost importance. This is the level where the most youth can experience God's love from caring and committed Christian leaders — youth and adults — in an ongoing weekly (or more often) format within their church and community. Because no one church or youth ministry can provide everything, youth and adults can enrich their Christian fellowship with other youth and adults from their city, conference, and state through district, conference, jurisdiction, and general church youth ministry opportunities and resources. The whole United Methodist connection can provide training, personal enrichment, and a cross-section of people, events, and experiences that are not possible on a local church level. An effective youth ministry plugs into this connectional opportunity.

### **District Council on Youth Ministry (DCYM)**

*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church* allows each district of an Annual Conference to have a District Council on Youth Ministry (DCOM). One purpose of a DCOM is to assist local churches in junior or middle high and senior high youth ministry more

effectively. A second purpose is to serve as a conduit for communication and involvement between the local churches, the Conference Council on Youth Ministries (CCYM), and the general agencies. A third purpose is to initiate ministry and training opportunities that relate to the needs and concerns of district youth. A fourth purpose is to promote and raise funds for the Youth Service Fund.

Care must be taken to be inclusive of all kinds of youth — youth from rural and urban areas, white and racial-ethnic youth, youth from large and small membership churches.

### ***Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM)***

Each annual conference may also have a Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM). The CCYM membership includes youth and adults. The purpose of the CCYM is to strengthen the local church and district youth ministry. The conference coordinator of youth ministries is responsible for initiating, facilitating, and supporting plans, activities, and projects for conference youth ministry through the CCYM.

The CCYM membership should be inclusive of all kinds of youth and congregations represented in the conference. The CCYM meets as necessary to outline policy, set a budget, and plan projects. The projects may include training events for youths and adults in youth ministry; year-round retreats and summer camps, assemblies and institutes. The CCYM also promotes and raises monies for the Youth Service Fund and enables youth participation in the annual conference. The Conference Council on Youth Ministry is not a substitute

for local church youth ministry, and all CCYM members should be active in their own local church and local youth ministry.

Consult *The Book of Discipline* for more specific information on the Conference Council on Youth Ministry.

### ***Jurisdictional Youth Ministry Organization (JYMO)*** ***[pronounced “ji’ mow”]***

*The Book of Discipline* provides for a Jurisdictional Youth Ministry Organization Convocation every other year in each jurisdiction. Usually the JYMO Convocations alternate with the National Youth Ministry Organization Convocation.

One of the primary purposes of the JYMO convocations is to provide a training event for conference youth leaders and the adults who work with them. Workshops and classes include leadership, spiritual growth, worship, communication, evangelism, a forum for racial or ethnic concerns, and other current issues vital to effective youth ministry. Another primary purpose is to elect representatives to the National Youth Ministry Organization Steering Committee. *The Book of Discipline* outlines specifics for voting delegates and NYMO Steering Committee nominees as well as suggested responsibilities for the JYMO Convocation.

### ***National Youth Ministry Organization (NYMO)*** ***[pronounced “knee’ moe”]***

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church created the National Youth Ministry Organization in 1976. The creation of NYMO enabled United Methodist

youth using the connectional system to have a presence on a general church level.

NYMO, due to its unique composition, provides a forum whose purpose is to listen to youth across the denomination, to communicate concerns, issues, and needs to the general church, and to administer the Youth Service Fund (YSF).

NYMO convocation participants are active United Methodist youth in grades seven through twelve, adult workers in youth ministry, youth members of general agencies, and NYMO Steering Committee members. The NYMO convocation is a time for worship, Bible study, spiritual awareness and leadership training. The NYMO convocation is held in odd-numbered years. It empowers youth to grow as leaders and spiritually, and it provides the setting for the NYMO Legislative Assembly. The NYMO Legislative Assembly is the “business meeting” for United Methodist youth.

### ***Youth Serving on Boards and Agencies***

The United Methodist Church has a unique organizational structure. This multi-structure design provides youth and adults who work with youth assorted opportunities for worship, experiences, training, personal enrichment, service, and interaction with Christian youth and adults. Youth are strongly encouraged to participate in the decision-making processes of The United Methodist Church through membership in committees, boards, and agencies. Youth have many opportunities to exercise leadership, skills, and talents. The United Methodist

Church is a church that understands youth to be the church of today as well as in the future.

The United Methodist Church is serious about including youth as members of the church today. Most boards and agencies, from the local church up to the general church, make provision for youth to serve.

Active youth participation in these varied boards and committees covenant that their voice, viewpoint, and vision are incorporated into the total ministry of the church. Junior highs should be included in this serving process as well as the senior highs from all the youth programs within your church. Where allowed, two youths should be encouraged to volunteer for each position. Involving two youths makes it much easier for them to speak in a group of adults. Youth should be reminded that serving on church committees and boards is a ministry of service with a real commitment of time and energy.

Youth can serve on almost any committee, board, or agency of the church. Get active! Get involved!

In summary, youth can serve on any committee, board, or agency except the trustees. Ability to serve as a trustee is based on issues of legalities (age). Get active. Get involved.

### ***Forum of Adults in Youth Ministry (FAYM) [pronounced “fame”]***

The Forum of Adults in Youth Ministry (FAYM) was chartered in 1992. FAYM was created by adult workers with youth who recognized the need for an organized fellowship supportive of adults in youth ministry. FAYM acts as a support base providing resources, networking, and



**Questions about NYMO, the NYMO Convocation, the NYMO Legislative Assembly, NYMO priorities, or Youth Service**

**Fund may be sent to NYMO, P. O. Box 840, Nashville, Tennessee 37202, or you may call (615) 340-7174. E-Mail: NYMO@aol.com.**

advocacy for individuals involved in youth ministry.

As a forum, FAYM interprets the role of youth ministry as a part of the total ministry of The United Methodist Church. FAYM assists in developing, maintaining, and interpreting standards for adults who work with youth. FAYM supports quality training opportunities and provides a network of support and fellowship. FAYM interprets and encourages youth ministry as a vocational commitment. Another important function of FAYM is to serve as a professional organization for adults certified in youth ministry through the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

FAYM, an affiliate organization of the General Board of Discipleship, also relates to the General Board of Higher Education Ministry, the General Board of Discipleship, and the Christian Educators Fellowship. FAYM conducts membership surveys and opinion polls that provide pertinent statistical data on United Methodist workers with youth. FAYM provides a platform for position papers and position statements on matters crucial to youth ministry.

The national chapter of FAYM meets once every other year during the General Board of Discipleship sponsored training event called the Forum for Adults in Youth Ministry.

For more information, write to FAYM, P. O. Box 23953, Nashville, TN 37202.

## **Out of the Past, into the Future**

The Methodist, Evangelical United Brethren, and since its formation, the United Methodist churches have responded to needs of adolescents since the early 1800's. From the beginning, Methodism has been connected with young people. The Methodist movement began as a student movement by John and Charles Wesley at Oxford University in England. The strong traditions of ministry with young people will continue as United Methodists bridge the gaps among cultures, society, and the church.

The United Methodist Church has been marked by change as the denomination has responded to the needs of people and to changes in the world. Likewise, youth ministry has evolved. The shape of youth ministry continues to change as we seek to respond to the needs of young people. The United Methodist Church has a rich past which includes ministry to, by, for, and with youth who have grown in their faith in Jesus Christ and who have made a difference in the world around them through outreach and service.

### ***Out of the Past***

The Sunday school was created in the eighteenth century to teach unchurched children and adults how to read by concentrating on the Bible, Christian training, church affiliation, and salvation. These Sunday schools were taught by lay church



members from varied denominations who worked together toward a common goal. This association of dedicated church leaders led to the formation of the YMCA in 1851 and the YWCA in 1858. The ministry of the Sunday school later became a ministry of local churches and was led by church members and remained focused on salvation and Christian teaching.

The Young People's Society for Christian Endeavor was established in the early 1880s. Christian Endeavor challenged youth to put their faith into action through worship, service, outreach, and fellowship. Before this time, young people were only allowed serious Bible study with *no* fellowship.

The "Epworth League" was established by the Methodist Episcopal Church and based on the Christian Endeavor concept. The Epworth League was a youth and young adult organization. These youth societies were very strong in mission outreach and social concerns.

The Methodist Church was formed in 1939 when the Methodist Protestant, Methodist Episcopal, and Methodist Episcopal South churches merged. Two years later, the first Methodist youth fellowship conference was held, and the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF) was established during the 1950s.

The Methodist Youth Caravan, commonly called the "Caravaners Movement," was active between 1939 and 1959. Teams composed of four college students and one adult counselor traveled to Methodist churches during the summer for six weeks. Each team spent one week, each at a different church, with a goal of strengthening the youth group



**The Evangelical United Brethren's supported a "Youth Fund." Similarly, Methodist youths supported the "M Y Fund." After The United Methodist Church was established in 1968, the two funds were merged to become the "Youth Service Fund." 100 percent of YSF monies are raised by youth and support projects selected by youth in many different settings. To find out more about Youth Service Fund, refer to the Youth Service Fund section in Chapter 7 of *Just the Facts*.**

and sharing information about church-related vocations.

### ***United Methodist Youth Ministry***

1968 is an important benchmark for the people called United Methodist. The Evangelical United Brethren (EUB) and the Methodist Church merged to form The United Methodist Church. The new church sought the best ways to be in ministry with all of its people — including youth. The United Methodist Council on Youth Ministry (UMCYM) was formed as a youth empowerment agency in 1968. In 1976, UMCYM was dissolved and the National Youth Ministry Organization was mandated to advocate for, empower, and gather youth together. It also administers the Youth Service Fund.

Today there are four general church agencies that have youth ministry components: The General Board of Discipleship, the General Board of Church and Society, the General Board of Global Ministries, and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Each agency

has its particular mandates stated in *The Book of Discipline*. Whether the concern is for training, resources, education, scholarships, advocacy, or service-learning, it is the responsibility of the staff of these general agencies to support youth ministry where you are — in the local congregation.

Congregations are the lifeline of the United Methodist Church. The local congregation is where the most young people will experience God's love. The goal is enabling youth and adults as capable and effective leaders, visionaries, and initiators in ministry.

### ***Into the Future***

Change marks the twentieth century. Cultural, social, and technological trends change at a rate almost too fast to follow. How will these changes affect youth ministry into the twenty-first century?

Our society is experiencing cultural shifts that are directly affecting young people. Some sociologists and demographers suggest that by the year 2020, there will be no majority race in the United States. Increasingly, youth ministry will have multiple ethnicities. What resources and skills will be needed?

More people are moving into less-populated areas — the south, the west, and the countryside. At the same time, people are becoming increasingly anti-institutional. There is a widening gulf between society and the church. How will the church respond?

Youth are facing a more complex and demanding world with an ever increasing urgency to succeed, sometimes in terms of rapidly progressing technology. There is pressure to grow

up early, violence at earlier ages, and changing family structures. Youth face adulthood with diminished resources and opportunities. Where will young people find hope?

These are challenges now facing the church and youth ministry. There is a need for long-term relational ministry. It can no longer be assumed that our children and youth will "grow up" Christian. Society no longer supports or instills Christian values. Being "in mission" starts at the front door of the church — not in some far-away land. What perception guides your local congregation's ministry to, with, and for youth in your church and community?

Youth ministry is in the midst of a fundamental paradigm shift. The methods presently in use today may not confront or deal with the problems facing the coming generations of adolescents. We are entering a new era of youth ministry! Because the paradigm is still shifting, there is not yet a clear shape. Questions are still being asked as to how ministry to, with, for, and by youth will occur in the twenty-first century. Responses to these questions are being tested and creatively answered.

What we know is that there must be faithful engagement between the church and society in order for ministry to have a valid place in the lives of adolescents. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we must move boldly and confidently into the future, creating opportunities for youth to experience God through fellowship, worship, service, and outreach to others. The systems approach is one. The United Methodist Church has chosen to address the complexities of the future.

# Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> From *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* – 1996. Copyright © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.
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- <sup>17</sup> Scott C. Noon, *Building Attendance in Your Youth Ministry* (Loveland, Colo.: Group., 1989), p. 43.

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# Further Reading

***BUILDING COMMUNITY in Youth Groups***, by Denny Rydberg with Robin Dursch and Ken Beebe. Published by Group Books. Copyright 1985.

Have you ever wondered what progression to follow to increase trust and caring in your youth group? This book lays a wonderful foundation for a natural and logical process to create closeness. With each step, Rydberg offers pages of optional games/activities to help you along your way. Notable helps; with each activity is a suggestion of materials and length of time for the event. Many require no materials and are excellent.

***BLACK AND WHITE STYLES OF YOUTH MINISTRY: TWO CONGREGATIONS IN AMERICA***, by William R. Myers, published by The Pilgrim Press. Copyright 1991.

This time Myers investigates and compares the youth ministry "styles" of two mainstream, middle-class, accessible, large congregations. One is African American and the other is Anglo. He looks at the culture, the agenda, the politics, and the theology used to build each church's "style" of ministry.

***THE COMING REVOLUTION IN YOUTH MINISTRY AND ITS RADICAL IMPACT ON THE CHURCH***, by Mark Senter III, published by SP Publications, Inc. Copyright 1992.

Senter has truly done his homework and this topic is vital for those who intend to build a solid youth ministry for the future. Senter includes a brief history of youth ministry, current status of various programs such as InterVarsity, Youth for Christ, and others. He gives the best

accounting of what has been tried, why it was tried, how it worked, when it stopped working, why and where we're going next. Good fodder for future thinkers.

***CONFRONTING THE IDOLATRY OF FAMILY***, by Janet Fishburn, published by Abingdon. Copyright 1991.

Fishburn challenges churches to rethink the idea of "traditional" family, and the assertion that we can save our society and our churches if we restore "traditional" family values in our culture. Fishburn proposes a new agenda for the church which can create healthy contexts for both "traditional" and "non-traditional" families.

***THE FIFTH DISCIPLINE: THE ART AND PRACTICE OF THE LEARNING ORGANIZATION***, by Peter Senge, published by Currency Doubleday. Copyright 1990.

***HOW TO SPEAK TO YOUTH; AND KEEP THEM AWAKE AT THE SAME TIME***, by Ken Davis, Group Books. Copyright 1991.

This is an easily understood step-by-step guide on improving talks with teens. Davis' humor is woven throughout the grounded and hard-won wisdom presented here.

***HOW TO WIN FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE***, by Dale Carnegie, published by Pocket Books, Simon & Schuster, Inc. Copyright 1981.

This volume is straight forward and powerfully presented. A must read for anyone planning to be an effective leader in any walk of life. The lessons here are bullet proof! Buy a copy for yourself and several extras to give as gifts.

# Further Reading

**IDEAS LIBRARY**, Edited by Wayne Rice and Mike Yaconelli, published by Youth Specialties. Copyright 1979. Currently over 50 volumes. Call for a catalog: 619-440-2333

These books represent an entire library with tons of tried and tested programming ideas submitted by the world's most creative youth workers. Games, Ice Breakers, Creative Communications, Fundraisers, Skits, Special Events, and more are included in abundance. This is a wonderful source of material to which every youth worker should have access.

**THE MEASURE OF OUR SUCCESS**, by Marian Wright Edelman, published by HarperCollins. Copyright 1992.

Marian Wright Edelman's message to her three sons about ways to live in this nation of increasing diversity. Her "Twenty-Five Lessons for Life" are very realistic, rational, and wise. This is a "must read" for youth and adults.

**THE MINISTRY OF NURTURE** by Duffy Robbins, Published by Zondervan Publishing House. Copyright 1990.

This book focuses on how to build real-life faith into your kids. There is a wonderful section on adolescent spirituality.

**QUEST FOR QUALITY IN THE CHURCH; A NEW PARADIGM**, by Ezra Earl Jones, published by Discipleship Resources. Copyright 1993.

Jones rephrases the fundamentals of systems thinking for use in the church. A wonderful resource for beginning to understand mission, vision, aim, and primary task, as well as leadership and quality in ministry. Systems thinking is an amazingly helpful perspective for creating youth ministry.

**RAISING SELF-RELIANT CHILDREN IN A SELF-INDULGENT WORLD; SEVEN BUILDING BLOCKS FOR DEVELOPING CAPABLE YOUNG PEOPLE**, by Stephen Glenn and Jane Nelson, published by Prima Publishing & Communications. Copyright 1987.

This is the consummate tome on raising children. Glenn, a gifted communicator and ardent thinker, has been an educational advisor to presidents and speaks around the globe on these matters. The seven building blocks are precious and vital. This book is aimed at parents of small children, the best time to master the thoughts and steps Glenn offers; however, anyone can improve mightily at any time by giving this one a slow and careful read.

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY WITH YOUTH**, D. Campbell Wyckoff and Don Richter, editors, published by Religious Education Press. Copyright 1982.

This is a an incredible book of ideas and inspiration. It is in some ways dated, but the insight and creativity are most helpful.

**ROAD TRIP**, by Micheal Selleck. Published by Zondervan Publishing House. Copyright, 1993

This unique book is a storehouse of information on traveling with teens. There are sections to cover every aspect of taking a trip; planning, budgeting, raising cash, deciding on vehicles, lodging, eating, how to caravan, deal with breakdowns, being lost on the road, discipline concerns, evaluations, and more. There isn't anything here on where to go for different things, only how to go with the least amount of hassle and the maximum amount of ease.

# Further Reading

***SERVANT LEADERSHIP***, by Robert K. Greenleaf, published by Paulist Press. Copyright 1977.

Greenleaf offers great insight into the concept of leadership and its many definitions. He offers helpful advice to those who wish to meld two seemingly conflicted roles—servanthood and leadership. The book contains many good thoughts about making leadership horizontal rather than vertical, and commentary on what he calls the “growing edge church.”

***THEOLOGICAL THEMES OF YOUTH MINISTRY***, by William Myers, published by Pilgrim Press. Copyright 1987.

This is a great book about congregational youth ministry. Myers uses seven theological themes in a “lectionary/seasons-of-the-year” framework. His thesis is struggling with and reconstructing the role of the congregation in “transformative” ministry *with* youth.

***13TH GENERATION: ABORT, RETRY, IGNORE, FAIL?***, by Neil Howe and Bill Strauss, published by Vintage. Copyright 1993.

Howe and Strauss, two generational theorists, take a deep, hard look at the people we call Generation X or the 13th Generation, those born between 1961 and 1981. Discussion revolves around generalities about who these people are, what dynamics have influenced them, and some hopeful prophetics about their future.

***TIME WITH JESUS: TWENTY GUIDED MEDITATIONS FOR YOUTH***, by Thomas F. Canucci, published by Ave Maria Press. Copyright 1993.

Canucci is a priest of the Catholic Diocese of Syracuse, New York, who

works primarily with adolescents and young adults. The book is filled with meditations which provide an effective way for youth to sense the powerful presence and love of God. This is a great resource which teaches the concept of meditative prayer and its applications in daily life.

***UNDERSTANDING MENTORING RELATIONSHIPS***, by Rebecca N. Saito and Dr. Dale A. Blyth, published by the Search Institute.

This book offers five types of mentoring programs: traditional, long-term focused, short-term focused, team, and group. The potential impact for youth and adult mentors, the nature of the relationship, the commitment involved, and the types of screening and training each calls for are presented.

***UNEXPECTED NEWS; READING THE BIBLE WITH THIRD WORLD EYES***, by Robert McAfee, published by The Westminster Press. Copyright 1984.

Brown does a wonderful job of helping the reader to understand the contextual power of the Bible.

***YOUTH MINISTRY NUTS & BOLTS: MASTERING THE MINISTRY BEHIND THE SCENES***, by Duffy Robbins. A Youth Specialties book published by Zondervan Publishing House. Copyright 1990.

This is a great primer of details, plans, processes, and concerns that must be addressed for a rock-solid foundation in a youth ministry.

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